

# WFRP 2nd Edition

## Making the Rules Fit the Atmosphere

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Last time I argued, yet again, for a Second Edition WFRP and how it could be different, and more improved, than the earlier and beloved version of the game.

This time, I'm going to suggest that those who would ever write this product stop, and plan ahead exactly what makes the game great and how the rules can reflect this.

An example - the WFRP world is a world wracked by turmoil and dark secrets, and the insanity system, with a nod to Call of Cthulhu reflects this. In this case we have a mechanic that reflects a number of things about the game: some knowledge invites damnation, some actions have repercussions, the menaces heroes face may sometimes haunt them, and the horrors of the world can drive anyone to the brink.

So let's look at the some of the themes of the game.

### Dark Fantasy

It is a game of dark fantasy, and I think this principle should guide the game and the mechanics. Now I'll define Dark Fantasy as I conceive of it. It is a genre in which magic and other supernatural forces that may exist are more likely to be injurious or insanity inducing that whimsical or wondrous. Abuse of magical energies has dark repercussions, as evidenced by the history entailed.

What are the consequences of this for rules? Well, the game can't hew too closely to be super realistic, otherwise the focus is lost on the fantastic elements as people argue over historical details and examples. On the other hand, everything simply can't be explained away as merely "magical" and explanations must be coherent and grounded in a sense of the world.

### Combat is Dangerous and Deadly

Combat is less deadly in WFRP than many think. Still, compared to many games it can be quite potentially lethal. I think this is due more to the frailty of many starting characters and monsters more than a consequence of the combat system.

How could the game reflect the risks of combat more so? Well part of the effectiveness of deadly combat is the consequences: you are putting your life at risk. Sadly, this consequences only become apparent when one dies. How can you introduce these consequences sooner? A number of possibilities exist.

When a character is wounded there are no penalties, a hit that inflicts one wound does not affect their ability to fight any less than a hit that causes 20 wounds. In combat, it would seem reasonable to affix a penalty to characters or their enemies when they have been taking a beating. Perhaps a penalty of -10 to all actions for characters who are Heavily Wounded or Severely Wounded.

Another alternative is to factor in pain and suffering when hit by a weapon or spell. After all, we've all injured ourselves in a minor way and wonder how anyone can stand the pain! An example rule for this would be that any time a character suffers a wound loss greater than their toughness, they are in pain for d3 rounds, at -10 to all actions, or even more dramatic, if the wound loss is twice as great as their strength, they can be stunned or in shock for d3 rounds unable to respond to anything until the shock passes or they come to their senses.

Keeping in the same theme of violence carrying a heavy price, characters and villains in the WFRP world should be marred by their lifestyle. While the critical hit table includes the loss of eyes and such, this should be more dramatic and extensive than it already is. A character takes a critical hit to a location, that location automatically receives an ugly scar. A surgeon or other medical practitioner fails or bungles a heal wounds roll, another ugly scar. Perhaps if a character fails a Toughness test after recovering from a Critical Hit they suffer a disability to that location: head hits would include missing eyes and ears, broken teeth or nose, and ugly facial scars or bald patches. Wounds to the torso would include ugly but concealable scars while leg and arm wounds would include severed or non-functioning digits or possibly even amputated limbs.

Shouldn't there be a greater chance of infected wounds (See Disease - Wound Infection WFRP p. 83)? A character who doesn't receive medical care for their wounds within a few hours or days should have to test for the risk of infected wounds, and there should be the possibility of losing legs or arms or other parts to infections. I'd like to see these rules revised to be more ghoulish.

And while we're talking about wounds and injuries, I'd like to see a bit more information about the more ghoulish of Old World practices - after all, medical treatment is no panacea necessarily for many of the ills. Bone saws and amputations, leeches and humor imbalances, I'd like to see the medical rules warped a bit to provide a bit more of these risky medical practices.

## **Abuse of Magic has Grave Repercussions**

We all know that magic is dangerous in the WFRP world, but there seems to be few repercussions over all unless one is a practicing necromancer or demonologist. This is something that needs to be fixed about the game, since a few well chosen rules can really enhance the drama of magic. Let's examine the two rules provided in WFRP to deal with the dangers of magic.

The first one is the Magic Test that is used when a practitioner of magic falls below 12 Magic Points, at which rate they must make a roll to see if they successfully cast the spell - which they probably will not. This rule is useless and does little to enhance the feel of magic. A better rule would be that they become exhausted at that level and suffer penalties of -10 to everything, or that it drains them mentally and they risk gaining an insanity point with every spell they cast below that limit.

The other rule is the Magical Disabilities Table which could be interesting, but it is confined to Demonologists, Necromancers, and oddly, Evil Wizards. Thus two

wizards who know the same spells but one is evil will gain Magical Disabilities while the other will not. Furthermore, this list is attached to their progression as wizards and not attached to the spells they cast. The demonology spells are better, providing insanity points as they are cast.

But what of other wizards? They're dabbling with energies that are dangerous - yet they risk little! I think that a table could be introduced or used when a Wizard takes hasty actions, such as casting a spell near a warp gate or some other act. When they're low on magic points, couldn't they're judgment become clouded, couldn't they perhaps mumble words or their spells have unintended actions not part of that spell?

I would suggest that the GM be given a mechanic which, when used in times of stress or when a Wizard uses their magic callously, a GM secretly tests to see if they are contacted or possessed by a demon, if they fall sway under some temporary insanity, or if they somehow internalize the magic and rupture organs, or something else that illustrates the dangers of magic.

### **The Gods Work in Mysterious Ways**

There are two things I want to comment upon this, but the first is related to the above section on magic: Clerics are nearly identical to Wizards. Their magic is much the same and rules do not clearly establish the differences between Clerics/Druids and Wizards.

I suppose I'd like to see Clerics given special powers not contingent upon spells, maybe a special ability that clerics of individual religions can draw upon, much like the "Hammer of Sigmar". I'd like to see Clerics of deities be able to banish entities subject to instability, probably a small percentage chance based upon their level of power. Likewise, I would think they could call upon the power of their gods for spontaneous acts of laying on hands or healing the diseased, or having some sort of vision, in the fashion of "Prayer and Blessings" to reflect their ability to carry out their gods divine will. Of course, there should be a chance that the deity frowns upon their needy or unnecessary beseechments, thus making clerics just at risk as Wizards of demanding too much.

The other point I wanted to touch upon are the Fate Points, I would like to see them more fully developed and a few possible rationales for their existence suggested. Should characters defy the gods, could they be robbed of fate points? Or perhaps are fate points actually the mortals ability to defy the will of the gods?

### **Conclusion**

A second edition is an excellent opportunity to go back and reshape the rules, to enhance those aspects of the game that really inspire us, rather than just an excuse to go back and fix broken rules. This is a chance to revisit and expand upon those elements that make WFRP so popular and distinct.