

Unearthed Arcana: Kits of Old

If you played AD&D second edition back in the 1990s, you probably remember kits. These character options were introduced in *The Complete Fighter's Handbook*, and became a mainstay of the rest of the books in the *Player's Handbook Rules Supplement* series. Though kits were notorious for providing wildly uneven benefits (some offered all-but-unnoticeable improvements, while others turned characters into walking engines of destruction), they did add depth and customization to a game that had previously offered few character choices after 1st level.

This month, Unearthed Arcana converts a few of the more popular kits from that era to new class options for the bard and fighter. If you played second edition AD&D, what are some of your favorite kits that you'd like to see converted to fifth edition? Let me know on Twitter (@mikemearls). Over the course of the year, the kits that inspire the most discussion could very well end up here.

Bard: College of Swords

Bards of the College of Swords are called blades, and they entertain through daring feats of weapon prowess. Blades perform stunts such as sword swallowing, knife throwing and juggling, and mock combats. But though they use their weapons to entertain, they are also highly trained and skilled warriors in their own right.

Their talent with weapons inspires many blades to lead double lives. One blade might use a circus troupe as cover for nefarious deeds such as assassination, robbery, and blackmail. Other blades strike at the wicked, bringing justice to bear against the cruel and powerful. Most troupes are happy to accept a blade's talent for the excitement it adds to a performance, but few entertainers fully trust them.

Blades who abandon lives as entertainers have often run into trouble that makes maintaining their secret activities impossible. A blade caught stealing or engaging in vigilante justice is too great a liability for most performer troupes. With their

weapon skills as their greatest asset, these blades either take up work as enforcers for thieves' guilds or strike out on their own as adventurers.

Bonus Proficiencies

When you join the College of Blades at 3rd level, you gain proficiency with medium armor and with scimitars.

Fighting Style

The College of Blades emphasizes mastery with weapons, granting you access to the two-weapon fighting option for the Fighting Style class feature.

Two-Weapon Fighting. When you engage in two-weapon fighting, you can add your ability modifier to the damage of the second attack.

Blade Flourish

At 3rd level, you learn to conduct impressive displays of skill with your weapons. When you use the Attack action on your turn and attack with a dagger, longsword, rapier, scimitar, or shortsword, you can attempt one of the following flourishes.

Defensive Flourish. You spin your weapon around you in swift circles, creating a hypnotic display. As a bonus action, you expend one use of Bardic Inspiration, rolling a Bardic Inspiration die and applying the number rolled as a bonus to your AC until the start of your next turn.

Trick Shooter's Flourish. This favorite trick of knife throwers allows you to expend one use of Bardic Inspiration as a bonus action. Roll a Bardic Inspiration die and apply the number rolled as a bonus to the next ranged attack roll you make with a dagger this turn. If the target of the attack is an unattended, inanimate object, the bonus equals double the die roll.

Unnerving Flourish. Your deadly display of combat prowess unnerves your opponents, leaving them cowering in fear and at your mercy. Whenever you reduce a creature to 0 hit points with a melee attack, you can use a bonus action to expend one use of Bardic Inspiration, and instead leave the creature at 1 hit point.

The creature is frightened of you for a number of minutes equal to your Charisma modifier. It must

also make a Charisma saving throw with a DC equal to your spellcasting DC + a bonus equal to the roll of your Bardic Inspiration die. If the creature fails this saving throw, it answers truthfully any questions you ask it and obeys your direct orders while it is frightened by this effect.

Extra Attack

Beginning at 6th level, you can attack twice, instead of once, whenever you take the Attack action on your turn.

Battle Magic

At 14th level, you have mastered the art of weaving spellcasting and weapon use into a single harmonious act. When you use your action to cast a bard spell, you can make one weapon attack as a bonus action.

Bard: College of Satire

Bards of the College of Satire are called jesters. They use lowbrow stories, daring acrobatics, and cutting jokes to entertain audiences, ranging from the crowds in a rundown dockside pub to the nobles of a king's royal court. Where other bards seek forgotten lore or tales of epic bravery, jesters ferret out embarrassing and hilarious stories of all kinds. Whether telling the ribald tale of a brawny stable hand's affair with an aged duchess or a mocking satire of a paladin of Helm's cloying innocence, a jester never lets taste, social decorum, or shame get in the way of a good laugh.

While jesters are masters of puns, jokes, and verbal barbs, they are much more than just comic relief. They are expected to mock and provoke, taking advantage of how even the most powerful folk are expected by tradition to endure a jester's barbs with good humor. This expectation allows a jester to serve as a critic or a voice of reason when others are too intimidated to speak the truth.

For the duchess with a taste for strapping young laborers, such tales might serve to warn the targets of her affections and force her to change her ways for lack of willing partners. Striking back at the jester only ruins her already damaged reputation, and might provide the best evidence that the jester's satires have hit their mark. But if she is kind and generous to her conquests, the

jokes and stories cast her as a kind of folk hero, while drawing even more potential partners to her.

Jesters are loyal to only one cause: the pursuit and propagation of the truth. They use their comedy and innocuous appearance to break down social barriers and expose corruption, incompetence, and stupidity among the rich and powerful. Whether revealing a con artist's treachery or exposing a baron's plans for war as driven by greed and bloodlust, a jester serves as the conscience of a realm.

Jesters adventure to safeguard the common folk and to undermine the plans of the rich, powerful, and arrogant. Their magic bolsters allies' spirits while casting doubt into foes' minds. Among bards, jesters are unmatched acrobats, and their ability to tumble, dodge, leap, and climb makes them slippery opponents in battle.

Bonus Proficiencies

When you join the College of Satire at 3rd level, you gain proficiency with thieves' tools. You also gain proficiency in Sleight of Hand and one additional skill of your choice. If you are already proficient with thieves' tools or in Sleight of Hand, choose another skill proficiency for each proficiency you already have.

Tumbling Fool

At 3rd level, you master a variety of acrobatic techniques that allow you to evade danger. As a bonus action, you can tumble. When you tumble, you gain the following benefits for the rest of your turn:

- You gain the benefits of taking the Dash and Disengage actions.
- You gain a climbing speed equal to your current speed.
- You take half damage from falling.

Fool's Insight

At 6th level, your ability to gather stories and lore gains a supernatural edge. You can cast *detect thoughts* up to a number of times equal to your Charisma modifier. You regain any expended uses of this ability after completing a long rest.

If a creature resists your attempt to probe deeper and succeeds at its saving throw against

your *detect thoughts*, it immediately suffers an embarrassing social gaffe. It might loudly pass gas, unleash a thunderous burp, trip and fall, or be compelled to tell a tasteless joke.

Fool's Luck

Jesters seem to have a knack for pulling themselves out of tight situations, transforming what looks like sure failure into an embarrassing but effective success.

At 14th level, you can expend one use of Bardic Inspiration after you fail an ability check, fail a saving throw, or miss with an attack roll. Roll a Bardic Inspiration die and add the number rolled to your attack, saving throw, or ability check, using the new result in place of the failed one.

If using this ability grants you a success on the attack, saving throw, or ability check, note the number you rolled on the Bardic Inspiration die. The DM can then apply that result as a penalty to an attack or check you make, and you cannot use this ability again until you suffer this drawback. When the DM invokes this penalty, describe an embarrassing gaffe or mistake you make as part of the affected die roll.

Fighter: Cavalier

The archetypal Cavalier excels at mounted combat. Usually born to nobility and raised in a royal court, a Cavalier is equally at home leading a cavalry charge or exchanging witty repartee at a state dinner.

Bonus Proficiencies

When you choose this archetype at 3rd level, you gain proficiency in two of the following skills of your choice: Animal Handling, Insight, Performance, or Persuasion. You can choose to gain one tool proficiency in place of one skill proficiency.

Born to the Saddle

At 3rd level, you have advantage on saving throws made to avoid falling off your mount. If you fall off your mount, you always land on your feet if you are capable of taking actions. Mounting or dismounting a creature costs you only 5 feet of movement, rather than half your speed.

Combat Superiority

At 3rd level, you gain a set of abilities that are fueled by special dice called superiority dice.

Superiority Dice. You have four superiority dice, which are d8s. A superiority die is expended when you use it. You regain all of your expended superiority dice when you finish a short or long rest.

You gain another superiority die at 7th level and one more at 15th level.

Using Superiority Dice. You can expend superiority dice to gain a number of different benefits:

- When you make a check to influence or control a creature you are riding, you can expend one superiority die to add it to the check. You apply this bonus after making the check but before learning if it was successful.
- When you make a weapon attack against a creature, you can expend one superiority die to add it to the attack roll. You can use this ability before or after making the attack roll, but before any of the effects of the attack are applied.
- When you make an attack with a lance while mounted, you can expend one superiority die to add it to your damage roll. In addition, the target of the attack must make a Strength saving throw (DC 8 + your proficiency bonus + your Strength modifier) or be knocked prone.
- If either you or your mount is hit by an attack while you are mounted, you can expend one superiority die as a reaction, adding the number rolled to your or your mount's AC. If the attack still hits, you or your mount take half damage from it.

Ferocious Charger

At 7th level, you gain additional benefits when you use superiority dice to increase your damage when you attack with a lance. You can expend up to two superiority dice on the attack, adding both to the damage roll. If you spend two dice, the target has disadvantage on its Strength saving throw to avoid being knocked prone.

Improved Combat Superiority

At 10th level, your superiority dice turn into d10s. At 18th level, they turn into d12s.

Relentless

Starting at 15th level, when you roll initiative and have no superiority dice remaining, you regain 1 superiority die.

Fighter: Scout

The archetypal Scout excels at finding safe passage through dangerous regions. Scouts usually favor light armor and ranged weapons, but they are comfortable using heavier gear when faced with intense fighting.

Bonus Proficiencies

When you choose this archetype at 3rd level, you gain proficiency in three of the following skills of your choice: Acrobatics, Athletics, Investigation, Medicine, Nature, Perception, Stealth, or Survival. You can choose to gain proficiency with thieves' tools in place of one skill choice.

Combat Superiority

At 3rd level, you gain a set of abilities that are fueled by special dice called superiority dice.

Superiority Dice. You have four superiority dice, which are d8s. A superiority die is expended when you use it. You regain all of your expended superiority dice when you finish a long or short rest.

You gain another superiority die at 7th level and one more at 15th level.

Using Superiority Dice. You can expend superiority dice to gain a number of different benefits:

- When you make a check that allows you to apply your proficiency in Athletics, Nature, Perception, Stealth, or Survival, you can expend one superiority die to bolster the check. Add half the number rolled on the superiority die (rounding up) to your check. You apply this bonus after making the check but before learning if it was successful.
- When you make a weapon attack against a creature, you can expend one superiority die to add it to the attack roll. You can use this ability before or after making the attack roll, but before any of the effects of the attack are applied.

- If you are hit by an attack while wearing light or medium armor, you can expend one superiority die as a reaction, adding the number rolled to your AC. If the attack still hits, you take half damage from it.

Natural Explorer

At 3rd level, you gain the ranger class feature of the same name, with the following alteration: You choose additional favored terrain types at 7th and 15th level.

Improved Combat Superiority

At 10th level, your superiority dice turn into d10s. At 18th level, they turn into d12s.

Relentless

Starting at 15th level, when you roll initiative and have no superiority dice remaining, you regain 1 superiority die.