

DWARVEN AXE MASTERY

Dwarves have several different social structures and sub-races scattered around the world but the most common and dominant in Morien is the mountain dwarf. The mountain dwarves have developed an extraordinary level of skill with their axes, and have trained their bodies to almost unbelievable levels of discipline and hardiness.

Dwarven Axe Masters are the leaders of mountain dwarf armies and act as elders and advisors to the dwarves. They are deadly in combat, but also wise and patient in life. Few are allowed into their training, and only those who can demonstrate they will use what they have learned with restraint and discernment.

Becoming an Axe Master is not easy. Non-dwarves are almost never admitted into their ranks. Few dwarves qualify. They must be solid, mature, and wise members of good standing with the dwarves and those who demonstrate skill with axes already.

The basic requirements are these:

- STR 13+
- CON 12+
- EGO 13+
- At least 6 OCV with axes
- Blacksmithing 11-
- Weaponsmithing (muscle powered melee weapons) 11-
- High esteem with dwarves

No psychological complications or physical complications that show an unstable, rash, extreme, or crazed personality. No casual killers, psychopaths, enraged or berserks.

Then, the character must spend time with the dwarves in meditation and study in discipline, integrity, trustworthiness, and in the creation of axes and similar weapons from the mining to the final production of a weapon. They must then use this skill to produce an axe from nothing, using only their own skills to mine and hunt the parts down and build their own axe that is up to the standards of the Axe Masters.

DWARVEN AXE MASTERY MANEUVERS

The training of the Axe Masters involves significant martial skill and time spent perfecting combat with the dwarven weapons of choice. Some of the techniques take advantage of the dwarf's size and build, and are only usable by dwarves themselves.

| MANEUVER | PTS | TIME | OCV | DCV | NOTES |
|--------------------|-----|------|-----|-----|---|
| Disarming Throw | 4 | 1/2 | +2 | -- | Disarm, +20 STR |
| Dwarven Charge | 5 | 1 | +2 | -- | STR+v/10 damage, +2 DC, Full move, take half damage, unbalancing, throw, you fall, dwarves only |
| Fallen Tower | 5 | 1/2 | +2 | -- | Grab, +10 STR |
| Fists of Stone | 5 | 1/2 | +1 | -- | +4d6 unarmed only |
| Iron Caress | 3 | 1/2 | +1 | +1 | +2d6 unarmed only |
| Leverage | 5 | 1/2 | +1 | +1 | Grab 2 limbs, Throw, +v/6, only if target larger than you, dwarves only |
| Mighty Throw | 5 | 1/2 | +1 | -- | +4 OCV to offset range modifiers |
| Sparks | 4 | 1/2 | -- | +1 | Flash 4d6 sight, both hands, only if near stone or metal |
| Steel Wind | 4 | 1/2 | +2 | +2 | Block, abort |
| Stone Cleave | 5 | 1/2 | -1 | -- | +4 DC strike |
| Takeaway | 4 | 1/2 | +1 | +1 | Disarm, +10 STR |
| Withering Response | 5 | 1/2 | +1 | -- | Disable, +2DC, only if target misses |

SKILLS:

Defense Maneuver I-IV
 Blacksmithing
 Tactics
 Weaponsmithing (muscle powered melee)
 WF: Dwarven weapons (2 pts for all); axes, maces, hammers, flails; shield wall

WEAPON ELEMENTS:

Default: axes
 +1: Bare Hands
 +1: Hammer
 +1: Flails
 +1: Flying Fist
 +1: Mace

NOTES:

Leverage will only take effect on targets larger than the attacker (in height or overall mass). Only dwarves can learn this maneuver.

Sparks strikes a nearby metal or stone object with a weapon, causing sparks to fly in the eyes of the attacker, temporarily blinding them.

Fists of Stone and *Iron Caress* both can only be used with no weapons; they are taught to Axe Masters in case they are caught disarmed or without a ready weapon.

Withering Response can only be used if the opponent attacks you and misses. It attempts to disable their main weapon arm.

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Once a character has at least 10 points in weapon maneuvers, weapon familiarity with at least one weapon other than axes, and at least unarmed combat as a weapon element, then they can begin to learn basic special abilities.

BASIC SPECIAL ABILITIES

Each basic special ability takes a week and 10 silver to learn in addition to the experience points, and requires the training of an experienced axe master. Once this time is up, then the character can spend their experience points and learn the new ability.

Bloodstrike

The yeti was strong and fast, but I could see it was losing strength as its life flowed out of several wounds, and finally it fell before the Axe Master.

Power: Blast 1d6 (vs PD) (26 active points)

Modifiers: NND (does not bleed) (+1), does Body damage (+1), Damage Over Time 8 increments 3 segments apart, cannot stack (+2¼); OIF edged weapon (-½), Concentrate ½ DCV (-¼), Linked to weapon attack (-½), Requires -3 Presence roll (-½) [+4¼; -2¼]

Total Cost: 8

Crippling Slash

My Lord, I could not see clearly how this technique was accomplished, it merely seemed to be a low swing of the axe at the legs, but the result was obvious to all. For the remainder of the fight, the warrior was crippled, moving slowly while he faced the Axe Master.

Power: Drain 1½d6 Running (15 active points)

Modifiers: OIF edged weapon (-½), Extra Time Delayed Phase (-¼), Side Effect -1 OCV always goes off (-½), No Range (-½) [-1¾]

Total Cost: 5

Crushing Blow

The orc had a huge halberd that clattered with the skulls of dwarves he'd slain. But the Axe Master was not impressed, and with a single blow shattered the weapon.

Power: Dispel 6d6 body (18 active points)

Modifiers: OIF weapon (-½), weapons and small inanimate objects only (-¼), Concentrate ½ DCV (-¼), Extra Time full phase focus (-½), Gesture (-¼), Incantation (-¼), Side Effect -1 DCV always goes off (-½), [-2½]

Total Cost: 5

Dragon Ward

Although the dragon's breath scorched the ground all around him, the Axe Masters stood unharmed and defiant. Somehow his spinning axe had protected the Master from the flames.

Power: Resistant Protection 16 ED (24 active points)

Modifiers: OIF weapon (-½), Only vs area effect attacks (-1), Concentrate ½ DCV (-¼), Cannot move full phase (-¼), Instant (-½) [-3½]

Total Cost: 5

Echoes of the Earth

The master bade us be silent and he placed his ear to the stone, listening for something. Later he told me he could hear the footsteps of the goblins and followed the sounds to their hiding place.

Power: Detect Sounds, discriminatory, ranged, telescopic +6, 360° arc of perception (23 active points)

Modifiers: Concentrate ½ DCV full time (-½), Extra Time full phase focus (-½), Requires quiet (-¼), Costs 2 END (-½), OIF stone surface (-½) [-2¼]

Total Cost: 7

Flashing Shield

Dwarven anger at the "long coward" as their word for archery is the origin behind several skills I saw demonstrated by the Axe Masters. The Flashing Shield is a technique involving spinning and swirling the axe in such a manner that arrows and sling stones were batted aside and deflected away from the Master.

Power: Combat Skill Levels +4 DCV vs ranged attacks (12 active points)

Modifiers: OIF weapon (-½), locks out shield block (-½), Instant (-½), Costs 2 END (-½) [-2]

Total Cost: 4

Kiss of the Forge

The Axe Master concentrated and his axe began to glow cherry red and white as if it was fresh out of the forge. Now instead of slicing the foe, it burned with fierce heat and the ice creature melted with each strike.

Power: Variable Special Effect on up to 45 active points of HKA (11 active points)

Modifiers: OIF weapon (-½), Concentrate ½ DCV (-¼), Extra Time full phase focus (-½), Requires -1 Ego Roll (-½), Costs 2 END per phase (-½) [-2¼]

Total Cost: 3

Shout of Courage

With a mighty cry, the Axe Master inspired all around him to courage and fierce determination to make another charge at the orcs, and this time they prevailed.

Power: Presence +10 (20 active points)

Modifiers: Usable by another (+1/4), Area Effect radius 16m (+3/4), Costs 2 END (-1/2), Requires -2 Presence Roll (-1/2), OIF weapon (-1/2), Concentrate 1/2 DCV (-1/4), Defensive only (-1), Extra Time full phase focus (-1/4) [+1; -3]

Total Cost: 5

Shout of Defiance

The mountains resonated with the Axe Master's mighty voice, and the orcs visibly quailed, losing their confidence as the dwarves advanced.

Power: Drain 1d6 presence (22 active points)

Modifiers: Area Effect Cone 10m (+1/2), Accurate Selective (+3/4); OIF weapon (-1/2), No Range (-1/2), Concentrate 1/2 DCV (-1/4), Extra Time full phase focus (-1/2), Incantation (-1/4) [+1 1/4; -2]

Total Cost: 7

Shout of Power

What he said I could not hear very well, the echoes were so loud and sudden. But the sheer power of his voice caused the orcs to stagger, and some fell back.

Power: Blast 3d6 (26 active points)

Modifiers: Area Effect Cone 6m (+1/4), does knockback (+1/4), Armor Piercing (+1/4); OIF weapon (-1/2), No Range (-1/2), Concentrate 1/2 DCV (-1/4), Extra Time full phase focus (-1/2), Incantation (-1/4), Requires Presence Roll (-1/4) [+3/4; -2 1/4]

Total Cost: 8

Smashing Strike

With a mighty shout and a single swing of his axe, the Master broke the door asunder.

Power: Dispel 6d6 body (18 active points)

Modifiers: OIF weapon (-1/2), barriers and doors only (-1/4), Concentrate 1/2 DCV (-1/4), Incantation (-1/4), Extra Time full phase focus (-1/2), Gesture (-1/4), No Range (-1/2), [-2 1/2]

Total Cost: 5

Soaring Axe

Among the skills I saw demonstrated, one of the most shocking was a technique allowing the dwarf to throw his axe far further than a bowshot, with the same deadly accuracy.

Power: No Range Modifier and x4 range on up to 30 active points of HKA (22 active points)

Modifiers: OIF throwing weapon (-1/2), Concentrate 1/2 DCV (-1/4), Extra Time Full Phase focus (-1/2), x2 END Cost (-1/2), Gestures both hands (-1/2) [-2 1/4]

Total Cost: 6

Steely Wings

Steely Wings was one of the most remarkable skills I saw demonstrated. The Axe Master hurled his axe and it struck the target with deadly force and circled through the air back to his fist. I've seen woodsmen hurl their axe with deadly accuracy, but never seen the axe return to their hand.

Power: Range based on STR on up to 30 active points of HKA (7 active points)

Modifiers: OIF weapon (-1/2), Concentrate 1/2 DCV (-1/4), Extra Time full phase focus (-1/2), Requires -1 Ego Roll (-1/2), [-1 3/4]

Total Cost: 2

Stone Soul

Before the battle, I was allowed to witness the Axe Masters in meditation. The warden told me this would protect them from the magics of the goblin shaman in battle. Later, I saw how the soul-withering necromancy of the goblins was of little use against the Axe Masters.

Power: Power Defense, Mental Defense, and Presence 5 each (15 active points)

Modifiers: Concentrate 1/2 DCV (-1/4), Extra Time full minute focus (-1), Requires -1 Ego Roll (-1/2), Incantation (-1/4) [-2]

Total Cost: 5

Strikeback

His opponent was faster, but the Axe Master managed to respond blow for blow and soon was the victor.

Power: HKA 2d6-1 (35 active points)

Modifiers: Constant (+1/2), Area Effect Surface Damage Shield (+1/4); Only from back/surprise attacks (-1), OIF Weapon (-1/2) Concentrate 1/2 DCV (-1/4), Extra Time Full Phase focus (-1/2), Requires Presence Roll (-1/4) [+3/4; -2 1/2]

Total Cost: 10

Sustenance of the Father

I was stunned to hear later that the miner had been trapped in the collapse for twelve days. Neither air or food was available to him, but he lived. The Mater told me that the power of the earth around him was his sustenance. It is a technique some dwarven miners learn, and it is a basic skill of the Axe Masters, I am told.

Power: Life Support: need no sleep, food, or air (16 active points)

Modifiers: Concentrate DCV full time (-1/2), Extra Time one minute focus (-1), cannot move (-1/2), Requires -2 Ego Roll (-1/2), Costs END (-1/2) [+; -3]

Total Cost: 4

Sweeping Strike

My fear for the Axe Master over facing two opponents was without merit, for he seemed just as comfortable striking two as he did one.

Power: Trigger on up to 45 active points of HKA (11 active points)

Modifiers: OIF weapon (-1/4), Extra Time delayed phase (-1/4), Side Effect -1 OCV always goes off (-3/4) [-1 1/4]

Total Cost: 5

Victorious Advance

The orcs were counting on the rough ground and slow movement of the dwarves to give their archers and shaman a chance to stop and destroy their opponents. Their hopes were soon destroyed as the Axe Masters gave a shout and surged forward with astonishing speed for the attack.

Power: Running +12m (12 active points)

Modifiers: Can only be used for half move (-1/2), Incantation (-1/4), Requires -1 Ego Roll (-1/2) [-1 1/4]

Total Cost: 5

ADVANCED SPECIAL ABILITIES

Learning advanced special abilities takes a level of training and dedication that few achieve. The character must have 15 points of martial arts maneuvers, at least 6 OCV with their axe, and at least 10 points of basic special abilities to purchase an advanced special ability. The character must have at least one additional basic abilities for each advanced special ability they may purchase. Learning a new advanced special ability takes a month of training and 15 silver per ability.

Blessing of the Father

I dare not include this last secret in my report for the duke. Only by the purest of accidents I came upon it, for no outsider is to know of the Blessing. The Dwarven Master sat and flames were passed over his naked skin while he meditated, and by the end of it his flesh was gray and dull. He was wrapped in his battle gear and strode in to combat, ignoring the weapons of the goblins and orcs as if they were made of straw. I am convinced he somehow had skin of stone.

Power: Damage Reduction 25% rPD, Resistance on up to 10 PD and 10 ED, Damage Negation 2d6 PD, 1d6 ED (34 active points)

Modifiers: Extra Time five minutes focus (-1 1/4), Concentrate 0 DCV full time (-1), Requires assistance of one other (-1/2), One continuing charge of 1 hour per day (-1/4), Requires -3 Ego Roll (-1/2) [-3 1/2]

Total Cost: 7

Coward's Reward

Although the orcs had archers, their arrows were of no concern to the Axe Masters, who with a flick of their weapons sent the missiles back on their owners.

Power: Reflection up to 45 active points RKA (30 active points)

Modifiers: Only from missile weapons (-1/2), OIF weapon (-1/2), Concentrate 1/2 DCV (-1/2), Gesture (-1/4), cannot move whole phase (-1/4) [-2]

Total Cost: 10

Dwarven Passage

I can only report on this second hand, as I have never seen it in use. It is said that an Axe Master used this technique to seal in an entire troop of orcs in a mine. Supposedly the Axe Master achieves such a kinship with the stone around them that they can reshape it to a certain extent.

Power: Tunneling 2m, fill in, through 7 PD (19 active points)

Modifiers: Concentrate 1/2 DCV (-1/4), Requires -2 Ego Roll (-1/2), Extra Time full phase focus (-1/2), Gesture (-1/2), Self Only (-1/2) [-2 1/4]

Total Cost: 6

Eyes of the Father

It is generally accepted by dwarves that their initial origins are from the stones of the very world around them. The Master spoke of way of seeing through "the Father's" eyes that pierced any darkness. Whatever the truth of the matter, the Axe Masters could certainly fight blindfolded as well as in daylight.

Power: Spatial Awareness, 360° arc of perception (37 active points)

Modifiers: Extra Time full turn focus (-3/4), Concentrate 1/2 DCV (-1/4), Incantation (-1/4), Requires Ego Roll (-1/4), Costs END (-1/2), Only when within 2m of stone or metal (-1/4)

[-2 1/4]

Total Cost: 11

Great Cleave

The Axe Master stood before five bundles of wood, in a semicircle at his front. With a shout, he swung and all the poles fell in half to his mighty swing.

Power: Area Effect any (3 meters in front of master) on up to 45 active points of HKA (11 active points)

Modifiers: OIF Weapon (-1/2), Extra Time Delayed Phase (-1/4), Concentrate 1/2 DCV (-1/4), Incantation (-1/4), Costs x2 END (2+STR) (-1/2) [-1 1/2]

Total Cost: 4

Long Coward's Bane

Another technique the Axe Masters used as they charged the orcs used their weapons as a sort of augment to their armor. Somehow they were able to deflect the missiles so they did little to no damage to the Masters on impact.

Power: Resistant Protection 12 PD, Hard defenses on up to 10 normal PD (24 active points)

Modifiers: OIF weapon or shield (-1/2), Gesture (-1/4), Requires Ego Roll (-1/4), only vs missiles (-1/2) [-1 1/2]

Modifiers (Resistant Protection): Hardened Defenses (+1/4); [+1/4; -1 1/2]

Modifiers (Hardened normal PD): Linked to Resistant Protection (-1/2) [-2]

Total Cost: 10

Strike of Fury

...when we left that establishment, the Master was silent but his fierce anger burned so hot I could almost feel it. He stood a moment then turned and with a mighty shout struck at the corner of the building and the entire structure collapsed.

Power: Dispel 10d6 body (45 active points)

Modifiers: Area effect Radius 8m (+1/2); OIF weapon (-1/2), only on standing structures (-1/2), Concentrate 1/2 DCV (-1/4), Extra Time full phase focus (-1/2), Gesture (-1/4), Incantation (-1/4), No Range (-1/2) [-2 3/4]

Total Cost: 12

Unforge

The match was so even I feared for my wager, but in a momentary full the Axe Master concentrated and his axe glowed with white as if from within. His next blow struck with such power it shattered his opponent's armor, falling off of him like leaves. Sadly I later lost my earnings in a game due to allegedly watered-down dwarven ale.

Power: dispel 6d6 body (18 active points)

Modifiers: OIF weapon (-1/2), Only against armor and weapons (-1/2), Concentrate 1/2 DCV (-1/4), Extra Time full phase focus (-1/2), Gesture (-1/4), Incantation (-1/4), No Range (-1/2) [-2 3/4]

Total Cost: 5

There are only a small number of academies that teach Dwarven Axe Mastery in Morien (one is in the south of the Westermark), but there are individual Axe Masters living about the mountains and hills of the land. Not all teachers know all of the techniques here, and learning some may require travel and seeking out a specific master. This master may only be willing to train a character with proper motivation and trust of the student.