

Golden Monkey Award

By Bruce Heard

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The Golden Monkey Award is an optional set of mechanics promoting and rewarding role-playing in first edition AD&D. Combat and treasure are at present the usual, if not the only, source of Experience. Nominations to the Golden Monkey Award fill the gap by providing the best players with Experience Points (XPs).

In the name of fairness, mechanics must remain unbiased and relevant to what Award Nominees need to attain their next experience levels. Two basic features help achieve that goal.

1. Fairness: Players and not the DM secretly vote for the best role-play effort. The DM distributes small pieces of paper bearing the players' names. Each secretly fills in his/her vote on the appropriate ballot and returns it to the DM. Players cannot vote for themselves (hence the need to identify voters/ballots) and any sort of bartering or peer-induced "dog-piling" are of course not allowed (hence the secret votes).

2. Relevance: XP awards are based on winners' experience levels to prevent awards from becoming progressively less attractive at higher gaming levels. A one or two hundred XP award for a first level character would be nearly irrelevant for a high level character who needs hundreds of thousands of XP's to reach the next level. As a result, a chart is needed to determine what XP reward is earned at what level.

Maintaining Interest

Nominations to the Monkey Award can be earned multiple times during single game sessions, for two reasons. Players are likely to shine at different times, doing different things. Holding off a single nomination for the end of a game session almost guarantees early role-playing feats will be ignored or forgotten. Holding nominations at different times not only helps prevent unfair omissions, but also keeps everyone's interest up during play, and gives more players a chance to earn something.

Finally, there is a major point for earning more than one nomination. At the end of the session (or at the end of an adventure comprising multiple sessions), the player with the most nominations clinches the Golden Monkey. This award can be anything valuable that strikes the DM's imagination, something perhaps reflecting how the player distinguished him/herself, or something relevant to what the character needs.

Golden Monkey Award, by Bruce Heard—Cont'd.

Determining XP Amounts

This can be subjective. I used a rule of thumb whereby a 1st level character could not possibly collect more than 85% of XP's needed for the next level, in the very unlikely event that the player clinched every single nomination during the adventure. This percentage decreases as characters earn experience levels (although the actual amount of XP awarded increases... by a lot in fact!) and finally becomes constant at Level 11 and higher. The lowest possible award ranges from 25% for thieves to 14% for wizards, which directly reflects the way character class experience charts are designed in AD&D 1st Edition.

I've included images of three Excel charts at the end of this document. On the far right of the first chart (9 Stages), the maximum possible award for each experience level is listed, followed by the actual percentage breakdown per character class. This is only for information purposes. The number of nominations should be determined in advance. Up to 9 nominations can be required to qualify for a Golden Monkey Award. Once the number of nominations has been preselected, use the appropriate award chart. Obviously, charts cannot be switched in mid play! All the charts add up to the same totals.

Judging Someone's Role-playing Performance

In order to judge another player's effort ask yourself whether one or more these features have been demonstrated:

1. Maintained a clear and consistent personality for the character.
2. Speaks "in character" as much as possible (speech patterns and accents?)
3. Acts according to what makes sense, as far as the character's personality is concerned and not what the player thinks would be in his/her immediate interest.
4. The character acts in accord with an established background story illustrating his/her nature and profile.
5. Alignment has been respected.
6. Has the player done more to entertain others rather than exploit game mechanics?

Roleplay Bonuses in 9 Stages (9 players or more, or a long adventure)											
Act I			Act II			Act III					
Levels	Scene 1	Scene 2	Scene 3	Scene 1	Scene 2	Scene 3	Scene 1	Scene 2	Scene 3	Max.	
1	120	120	120	120	120	120	120	120	120	1,080	86%
2	120	120	120	120	120	120	120	120	120	1,080	88%
3	228	228	228	228	228	228	228	228	228	2,052	82%
4	432	432	432	432	432	432	432	432	432	3,888	78%
5	804	804	804	804	804	804	804	804	804	7,236	72%
6	1,440	1,440	1,440	1,440	1,440	1,440	1,440	1,440	1,440	12,960	65%
7	1,896	1,896	1,896	1,896	1,896	1,896	1,896	1,896	1,896	17,064	57%
8	2,112	2,112	2,112	2,112	2,112	2,112	2,112	2,112	2,112	19,008	48%
9	2,220	2,220	2,220	2,220	2,220	2,220	2,220	2,220	2,220	19,980	40%
10	2,280	2,280	2,280	2,280	2,280	2,280	2,280	2,280	2,280	20,520	34%
11	6,000	6,000	6,000	6,000	6,000	6,000	6,000	6,000	6,000	54,000	25%
12	6,000	6,000	6,000	6,000	6,000	6,000	6,000	6,000	6,000	54,000	25%
Roleplay Bonuses in 5 Stages (6 to 9 players, or short adventure)											
Levels	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 4	Stage 5					Max.	
1	216	216	216	216	216					Bonus	
2	216	216	216	216	216					1,080	
3	410	410	410	410	410					2,052	
4	778	778	778	778	778					3,888	
5	1,447	1,447	1,447	1,447	1,447					7,236	
6	2,592	2,592	2,592	2,592	2,592					12,960	
7	3,413	3,413	3,413	3,413	3,413					17,064	
8	3,802	3,802	3,802	3,802	3,802					19,008	
9	3,996	3,996	3,996	3,996						19,980	
10	4,104	4,104	4,104	4,104						20,520	
11	10,800	10,800	10,800	10,800						54,000	
12	10,800	10,800	10,800	10,800						54,000	
Roleplay Bonuses in 3 Stages ("cutthroat" version--short adventure, small party--5 or fewer people)											
Levels	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3							Max.	
1	360	360	360							Bonus	
2	360	360	360							1,080	
3	684	684	684							2,052	
4	1,296	1,296	1,296							3,888	
5	2,412	2,412	2,412							7,236	
6	4,320	4,320	4,320							12,960	
7	5,688	5,688	5,688							17,064	
8	6,336	6,336	6,336							19,008	
9	6,660	6,660	6,660							19,980	
10	6,840	6,840	6,840							20,520	
11	18,000	18,000	18,000							54,000	
12	18,000	18,000	18,000							54,000	

Golden Monkey Award Charts

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