D&D 5.5 (5.5e) Player Quick-Start Guide

A quick-reference handout for new adventurers and returning 5e veterans.

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1. The Core Engine: The "D20 Test"

In the 5.5 rules, **Ability Checks**, **Attack Rolls**, and **Saving Throws** are all grouped under one umbrella term: a **D20 Test**. Whenever you attempt something risky or contested, the flow is always the same:

1. **Roll a d20.**
2. **Add your Ability Modifier** (from one of your 6 core stats).
3. **Add your Proficiency Bonus** (if you are proficient in that skill, saving throw, or weapon).
4. **Compare the total** to the target number (**Armor Class [AC]** for attacks, or **Difficulty Class [DC]** for checks and saves). **Meet or beat it, and you succeed!**

Advantage & Disadvantage

- **Advantage:** Roll **2d20** and take the **higher** result.
- **Disadvantage:** Roll **2d20** and take the **lower** result.
- **The Golden Rule:** Advantage and Disadvantage **never stack**, and they **cancel each other out completely**. Even if you have three sources of Advantage and one source of Disadvantage, they cancel out and you roll a single flat d20.

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2. The 6 Ability Scores

Your big **Ability Score** (e.g., 16) determines your **Ability Modifier** (e.g., +3). The **Modifier** is the number you actually add to your dice rolls!

Ability Score	**What It Governs**	**Key Uses & Associated Skills**
Strength (STR)	Raw physical muscle and bodily power.	Melee weapons, jumping, carrying gear, **Athletics**.
Dexterity (DEX)	Agility, reflexes, balance, and coordination.	Ranged & Finesse weapons, Armor Class (AC), Initiative,

Ability Score	What It Governs	Key Uses & Associated Skills
		Acrobatics, Sleight of Hand, Stealth.
Constitution (CON)	Endurance, stamina, resilience, and vital force.	Hit Points (HP), resisting poison/disease, **Concentration saves** to maintain spells.
Intelligence (INT)	Book smarts, memory, logic, and deduction.	Wizard spellcasting, **Arcana, History, Investigation, Nature, Religion**.
Wisdom (WIS)	Street smarts, awareness, intuition, and willpower.	Cleric/Druid/Ranger spellcasting, **Animal Handling, Insight, Medicine, Perception, Survival**.
Charisma (CHA)	Force of personality, confidence, and presence.	Bard/Paladin/Sorcerer/Warlock spellcasting, **Deception, Intimidation, Performance, Persuasion**.

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3. Calculating Your DCs (Difficulty Class)

Whenever you force a monster or NPC to make a Saving Throw against one of your spells, class features, or weapon effects, *you* set the target number they must meet or beat:

Your Save DC = 8 + Proficiency Bonus + Ability Modifier

- **Spellcasters** use their Spellcasting Ability Modifier (**INT**, **WIS**, or **CHA**).
- **Martial Characters** (for Battle Master maneuvers, Unarmed Grapples/Shoves, Monk abilities, or Weapon Masteries like *Topple*) almost always use **STR** or **DEX**.

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4. Actions in Combat

On your turn, you can **Move** up to your Speed and take **ONE Action**. You may also take **one Bonus Action** on your turn (only if a specific spell, weapon property, or feature gives you one) and **one Reaction** per round (usable on anyone's turn when triggered).

Action	What It Does & Key 5.5 Rules
Attack	Swing a melee weapon, fire a ranged weapon, or make an Unarmed Strike. **5.5 Updates:** (1) You can draw or stow one weapon for free with *every* attack you make. (2) **Grapple** and **Shove** are now Unarmed Strike options inside the Attack action—instead of a contested Athletics check, the target makes a STR or DEX save against your Unarmed DC (`8 + Prof + STR`).
Magic *(New)*	Cast a spell with a casting time of 1 Action, use a magic item that requires an Action, or activate a magical feature.
Dash	Gain extra movement for the current turn equal to your Speed.
Disengage	Your movement does not provoke Opportunity Attacks for the rest of the current turn.
Dodge	Until the start of your next turn, attack rolls against you have Disadvantage (if you can see the attacker), and you make DEX Saving Throws with Advantage.
Help	Give an ally Advantage on their next ability check or attack roll. *(5.5 Update: To Help with a skill or tool check, you must be proficient in that skill or tool yourself!)*
Hide	Make a flat **DC 15 Dexterity (Stealth) check** while Heavily Obscured or behind Three-Quarters/Total Cover. On a success, you gain the *Invisible* condition until you

Action	What It Does & Key 5.5 Rules
	make noise, make an attack, or cast a spell with a verbal component.
Influence *(New)*	Combine roleplay and a social check (Persuasion, Deception, Intimidation, Performance, or Animal Handling) to alter a creature's attitude or request aid.
Ready	Prepare an action to trigger later in the round when a specific condition occurs. Uses your **Reaction** when triggered.
Search	Make a Wisdom check (Perception, Insight, Medicine, or Survival) to discern something that isn't immediately obvious.
Study *(New)*	Make an Intelligence check (Arcana, History, Investigation, Nature, or Religion) to recall lore or analyze a monster, trap, or object mid-encounter.
Utilize	Interact with a non-magical object that requires an Action (spreading caltrops, lighting a hooded lantern, pulling a heavy lever, fastening manacles).

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5. Areas of Effect (AoE) & "Emanations"

Every AoE has a **Point of Origin**—the spot in space where the effect begins. **Total Cover** blocks lines of effect from the Point of Origin unless a spell specifically states that it goes around corners.

AoE Shape	How It Works	Origin Included in Area?
Cone	Shoots outward from a point you touch (usually yourself). At any point along its length, a Cone's width is equal to its distance from the origin.	No *(unless you choose)*

AoE Shape	How It Works	Origin Included in Area?
Cube	Covers a square area. The Point of Origin sits anywhere flat on one **face** of the Cube.	No *(unless you choose)*
Cylinder	A circle of a specific radius that shoots straight up or down to a set height.	**Yes**
Line	Shoots straight out from an origin point with a fixed width (usually 5 feet).	No *(unless you choose)*
Sphere	Radiates outward in all directions from a central point in space.	**Yes**
Emanation *(New)*	Replaces old "aura" wording (like *Spirit Guardians*). Extends in straight lines in all directions from the **outer edge of a creature or object's space** and moves with them.	**No** *(Creator is excluded unless specified)*

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6. Top 5 "Wait, That Changed?!" Rules for 5.5

If you have played the 2014 version of 5e before, keep these major quality-of-life upgrades in mind:

1. **Potions & Healing Buffs:** Drinking a Potion of Healing (or administering one to an ally) is now officially a **Bonus Action**! Furthermore, healing spells (*Cure Wounds*, *Healing Word*) have had their base healing dice **doubled** so combat healing is much more impactful.
2. **Heroic Inspiration:** Instead of having to declare Advantage *before* you roll a d20, **Heroic Inspiration** now lets you **reroll ANY single die immediately after rolling it** (a d20, a damage die, a healing die—anything!) and use the new roll.
3. **The New Spellcasting Rule:** Forget the confusing 2014 "Bonus Action spell" rule. In 5.5, the rule is simple: **You can only expend ONE spell slot to cast a spell per turn.** If you have a spell from a magic item, feat, or class feature that doesn't expend a spell slot, you can still cast it on the same turn!

4. **Weapon Masteries:** Martial and half-martial classes unlock special tactical properties on their weapons—such as **Graze** (deal ability modifier damage even on a missed attack), **Topple** (knock an enemy Prone), **Nick** (make your off-hand Light weapon attack as part of your main Attack action instead of using your Bonus Action), or **Vex** (gain Advantage on your next attack against the target).
5. **Streamlined Surprise & Exhaustion:**