

DEFINITIVE SUMMARY OF RULES CHANGES FROM B/X TO BE

by DM Perky – v1.0, 11-07-2022

This chart is a work-in-progress attempt to summarize all the differences between the 1981 Dungeons & Dragons Basic/Expert rules (by Moldvay/Cook & Marsh) and the 1983 Dungeons & Dragons Basic and Expert rules (by Frank Mentzer) as part of the BECMI series. For purposes of this chart, where differences appear from B to X, the X version is used. Where differences appear between the first and second printings of BE, the second printing rules are used).

Rule	B/X	BE	Notes
Writing Credits	By Gary Gygax and Dave Arneson – Edited by Tom Moldvay (B); Edited by David Cook with Steve Marsh (X) – © 1981	By Gary Gygax and Dave Arneson – Revised by Frank Mentzer; Editing by Anne C. Gray (E) – © 1983	
Art Credits	Cover by Erol Otus (from a design concept by Jeff Dee (X)); Illustrations by Jeff Dee, Wade Hampton (X only), David S. LaForce, Erol Otus, James Roslof, Bill Willingham	Cover by Larry Elmore; Illustrations by Larry Elmore, Jim Holloway (B only), and Jeff Easley (B only).	
Intended Audience	For 3 or More Adults, Ages 10 and Up	For Any Number of Players, Ages 10 and Up	
Number of Books	One Basic, One Expert	Two Basic (Player & DM), One Expert	BX: Two Modules, B2/X1 BE: One Module, X1
Ability Score Generation / Hopeless Characters	Roll 3d6 in order. If below avg in every ability, or > 1 very low (3-6) score, DM MAY allow rolling-up a new character.	Roll 3d6 in order; If highest Ability Score < 9, or if 2 or more Ability Scores are < 6, discard character and roll again.	
Hit Points	As an option, DM may allow 1s or 2s to be re-rolled at first level only.	No mention of re-rolling HPs	
Cleric Class	Clerics are humans dedicated to the service of a god or goddess.	Clerics are humans dedicated to serving “a great and worthy cause” (such as their alignment).	BE: The DM may choose to add flavor to his games by adding mythological deities. But even then, no deity will “react to the actions of any individual character, nor offer any special help.”
	Clerical spells and powers are “divinely given.” Spells are regained by praying uninterrupted for <i>about</i> an hour when well-rested (<i>about</i> one night’s sleep).	A Cleric’s spells and powers come from “the strength of their beliefs.” Spells are learned and regained “mystically” by meditating for one hour when well-rested (one night’s sleep).	
	Turning is channeling the power of the Cleric’s god or goddess to “scare” or destroy the undead.	Turning is a power “inherent” in the Cleric to “force away” or destroy undead. Turning list is slightly different.	

	B/X cleric spell progression preserved from OD&D; at 6th level jumps from 2nd level spells to 3rd AND 4th level spells, and at 7th level get access to Raise Dead (5th level spell).	BE cleric spell progression is slowed down and more gradual, with access to additional lower level spells being granted rather than higher level spells.	
	Cleric's Turning ability peaks at level 11	Cleric's Turning ability diverges at level 10; adds the concept of "D+" at levels 11-14 (3d6 of undead destroyed rather than 2d6)	
Dwarf Class	All dwarves have long beards.	Female dwarves have short beards.	This is, of course, the most significant and controversial change of all.
	Saving Throws are worse starting at level 4	Saving Throws are better starting at level 4	
Elf Class	The number of spells that an Elf can memorize is also the number of spells they can have in their spell book. New spells can only be added to a spell book upon level advancement.	Spell books can have any number of spells in them, and start with two, one being 'Read Magic.' New spells can be added upon level advancement, added from found scrolls, stolen spell books or through spell research.	"In BE, magic-users [elves] start out knowing Read Magic, and can learn other spells so that their spell books can outpace the number of spells they can cast per day. And the upshot is that a magic-user [elf] could always learn Read Magic, but never need to prepare it on adventures. Any scrolls they found could be taken back home, where Read Magic could be cast at their leisure. But in B/X, magic-users [elves] only know as many spells as they can cast. And Moldvay notes in this section that magic-user/elf spells can only be read by using a Read Magic spell. This means that if a magic-user [elf] wants to use scrolls, they have to use up one of their 1st level slots learning this spell. Even with Expert Rules, they only get 4 first level spells! So [in B/X] magic-user and elf players have to make a choice: use one of their precious, limited 1st level slots to get access to scrolls, or use that slot on another spell they want to cast more frequently. And even if they choose to go with Read Magic, when do they choose it? First level? Second? Seventh? Eleventh? In Moldvay, it seems, magic-users [elves] weren't expected to be fountains of powerful magic, but rather hoarders of scrolls (and the ultra-rare wands/staves/rods). Certainly, this explains why scrolls have a relatively high chance of being found... B/X magic-users [elves] get their power from resource management, combining their limited personal spells with scrolls and limited charge magic-items." -Iosue, EnWorld Forums

	Elf Saving Throws are worse beginning at level 4	Elf Saving Throws are better beginning at level 4	
Fighter Class	Fighter Saving Throws are better beginning at level 10	Fighter Saving Throws are worse beginning at level 10	
	Halflings share a Saving Throw Table with Dwarves.	Halflings have their own Saving Throw Table.	In B/X, the Basic book has different saves than in the Expert book. The Halfling/Dwarf table in B/X Basic has worse saves than the BE Halfling table does, but the Halfling/Dwarf saving throws in the B/X Expert book are identical to those in BE.
Magic-User Class	The number of spells that a MU can memorize is also the number of spells they can have in their spell book. New spells can only be added to a spell book upon level advancement.	Spell books can have any number of spells in them, and start with two, one being 'Read Magic.' New spells can be added upon level advancement, added from found scrolls, stolen spell books or through spell research.	"In BE, magic-users [elves] start out knowing Read Magic, and can learn other spells so that their spell books can outpace the number of spells they can cast per day. And the upshot is that a magic-user [elf] could always learn Read Magic, but never need to prepare it on adventures. Any scrolls they found could be taken back home, where Read Magic could be cast at their leisure. But in B/X, magic-users [elves] only know as many spells as they can cast. And Moldvay notes in this section that magic-user/elf spells can only be read by using a Read Magic spell. This means that if a magic-user [elf] wants to use scrolls, they have to use up one of their 1st level slots learning this spell. Even with Expert Rules, they only get 4 first level spells! So [in B/X] magic-user and elf players have to make a choice: use one of their precious, limited 1st level slots to get access to scrolls, or use that slot on another spell they want to cast more frequently. And even if they choose to go with Read Magic, when do they choose it? First level? Second? Seventh? Eleventh? In Moldvay, it seems, magic-users [elves] weren't expected to be fountains of powerful magic, but rather hoarders of scrolls (and the ultra-rare wands/staves/rods). Certainly, this explains why scrolls have a relatively high chance of being found... B/X magic-users [elves] get their power from resource management, combining their limited personal spells with scrolls and limited charge magic-items." -Iosue, EnWorld Forums
	MU Saving Throws are better beginning at level 11	MU Saving Throws are worse beginning at level 11	
Thief Class	Thieves have a better skill table starting at 4 th level.	The Thief skill table was "nerfed" beginning at 4 th level to spread out progression over BECM's 36-levels (see Notes).	BECMI author Frank Mentzer: "Back in the '80s I wrote the BECM version/edition of the D&D game. The span of 36-character levels was a requirement. When I spread the thief abilities over that range, it was a huge mistake, because hardly anybody played higher than Level 12. So I've

			revised it, added new stuff, made it lots more playable and interesting. And I've gone with "Rogue" as a title, because 'thief' is too limiting. (Jack-of-all-Trades, or Factotum, would be even better.)" His work is posted on the Piazza: http://www.thepiazza.org.uk/bb/viewtopic.php?f=64&t=17008
	Thieves may use any weapon.	Thieves may not use two-handed weapons.	
	Thieves using Hide in Shadows must remain perfectly still.	Thieves using Hide in Shadows may use their Move Silently ability.	
	Hear noise is a range on a d6	Hear noise is a %	
	Thief Saving Throws diverge at level 5	Thief Saving Throws diverge at level 5	Some get better, most get worse.
Rolling for Damage	RAW, DM rolls damage for PCs	Players roll their own damage.	
Cleric Spells	B/X has spell levels 1-5, and has only 6 third and fourth level Cleric spells.	BE expands the third and fourth level Cleric spell lists from 6 to 8 spells and adds sixth level spells.	BE third level Cleric spells added are Cure Blindness and Speak with the Dead. Fourth level adds Animate Dead and Dispel Magic. Sixth level spells added are Animate Objects, Find the Path, Speak with Monsters (<i>Babble</i>), Word of Recall.
MU/Elf Spells	B/X has 12 spells per level	BE drops the number of fifth and sixth level spells to 8	BE deletes the fifth level spells Contact Higher Plane, Feeblemind, Telekinesis, and Transmute Rock to Mud, and the sixth level spells Control Weather, Move Earth, Part Water and Reincarnation. The Mentzer Companion/Master Sets have 13 spells each level (and thus not immediately rollable on any Platonic die). The 1991 Aaron Allston <i>D&D Rules Cyclopeda</i> also has 13 spells at each level. The spells added are, respectively by level 1-6: <i>Analyze, Entangle, Create Air, Clothform, Dissolve, and Stoneform</i> . (Allston also has level 7-9 spells based on the Mentzer Companion/Master Sets).
	No description of Detect Invisible spell	Detect Invisible spell description added	There are a number of other differences in the range, duration and spell descriptions between the versions.
Monsters		Some monsters added, have name changes and/or omitted	
Flasks of Oil	If not "touched with a flaming torch," DM determines chance of oil catching fire.	If torch is thrown at creature hit with oil, roll to hit AC 10.	
Unarmed Combat	1d2 damage per hit, modified by STR	1 pt of damage per hit, modified by STR	
Lance Attacks and Set Spear vs. Charge	Lance attack not limited by class but is "best used by a fighter" mounted on	Lance attacks limited to Fighters, Dwarves and Elves. Set spears only allowed by	

	horseback. Any class can set spear vs. charge (except Clerics who can't use spears)	Fighters, Dwarves, Elves and Halflings.	
Natural Healing	1d3 HP healed per full day of uninterrupted rest	No rule stated in BE.	BE: Some have adopted 1 HP per day as the rule, contained in BE-era modules: If a character rests for an entire day he heals 1 HP. Rest means no fighting/combat, magic using, conducting any energetic activity, or more travel than within an inn (upstairs, downstairs, etc.). If the character does not spend a major portion of the day resting, he does not heal at all. Full bed rest back in town is 3 HP per day. (B2 4, B6 3, B1-9 113, B11 11, X7 2). Others import the 1d3/day rule (after a full day of rest) from B/X (Mentzer has called this "the default" rule). Still others use a 1d4/day rule from the later The Classic Game box set (TSR 1106, 1106A) which says to roll a d4 per day if just in town resting but not making a concerted effort to be full bed rest. (TCG 46)
Secret Doors	Each character has only one chance to find.	No limit on the number of times you can search.	
Finding Traps	Any character has a 1 in 6 chance (Dwarf 2 in 6) of finding a trap if searching in the correct area. Does not apply to magical traps.	All characters have a 1 in 6 (Dwarves 2 in 6) chance to find "large traps." ONLY thieves have a chance of finding a "small trap."	However, B/X also says in the Thief description that Thieves "are the only characters who can... find traps without using magic to do so... a thief's training includes learning how to... remove small traps (such as poisoned needles)." So it may be fair to say that the BE rules are simply a clarification of the B/X rules here and not a change at all.
Triggering Traps	"If any character does something which could trigger a trap (such as walking over a certain point), the trap will be sprung on a roll of 1-2 (on 1d6). The DM must check for each character passing the spot until the trap is either sprung or safely passed by all." (B22)	No such chance of a trap not triggering is given in BE	
Resting	"RESTING: After moving for 5 turns, the party must rest for 1 turn. One turn in 6 (one each hour of the adventure) must be spent resting. If characters do not rest, they have a penalty of -1 on all "to hit" and damage	No such blanket resting rule is specified in BE, apart from after forced marches or running	

	rolls until they <i>do</i> rest." (B19)		
Encumbrance	Optional rule.	Not an optional rule. System and values significantly redone in BE. Characters can carry more.	
Wandering Monsters		Redone in BE. A bit tamer overall.	
Calculating XP	DM uses a formula and a table based on HD.	Each monster entry contains their XP value.	
Dividing up XP	PCs handle treasure division, but the DM divides XP evenly (B22).	Monster XP is divided evenly, but each character or retainer gets 1 XP for each 1 gp of treasure they keep (DMRB 12).	
Blindness	"[A] blinded creature may not attack" (B15)	"[T]he victim of blindness may not move or attack. However, you may use the following optional system if desired. A blinded creature may attack, but with a -4 penalty on all Hit rolls. Anyone attacking a blinded creature gains a +4 bonus to all Hit rolls, since the victim cannot properly defend itself. A blinded creature may move at 1/3 normal speed, or up to 2/3 normal speed if guided or led." (DMR 23)	