

THE LORD OF THE RINGS

RULES FOR RESOLVING CRITICAL STRIKES

Critical Strikes are a great way to enliven and endanger combat situations. There are different Critical Strike tables for six specific body parts. Each comes in three severity levels, detailing the risk of an attack.

BASIC MECHANICS

It is not an easy task to hit an opponent fierce enough to inflict a Critical Strike. Therefore, an attack test must be equal to or higher than the target's Defence *plus* a certain number determined by his armour and the attacker's weapon type. If this threshold is reached or exceeded, the attack results in a Critical Strike which is resolved *before* the normal damage roll. A critical comes in one of three severity levels, determined by the attack's degree of success. Table CS 1.1 summarises the test modifiers that indicate the thresholds for the three different severity levels.

SEVERITY LIMITS

There may be a limit in the severity obtainable with an attack depending on the attacker's weapon. Daggers and clubs cannot score more than a Medium Critical Strike, while whips, thrown stones and unarmed attacks are limited to Light criticals.

NOTE: It is recommended to make use of the accompanying *Combat Status Sheet* where the test modifiers needed for scoring a critical against a specific character (which may differ due to armour, see Table CS 1.1) can be recorded. It is the best to include a character's Defence, because the recorded values can directly serve as the TNs for criticals. You will need to have these TNs ready at one glance for both PCs and NPCs.

HIT LOCATIONS & CALLED SHOTS

After the severity of a Critical Strike has been determined, check which body part has been hit (alter-

TABLE CS 1.1: CRITICAL STRIKE TEST MODIFIERS

TARGET'S ARMOUR	LIGHT	MEDIUM	SEVERE
No Armour	+5	+8	+11
Leather/Armour of Heroes	+6	+9	+12
Scale mail	+7	+10	+13
Chainmail, ordinary	+8	+10	+13
Chainmail, Orc	+8	+11	+14
Chainmail, Dwarf	+9	+11	+14
Chainmail is a hauberk	+1 to base	+1 to base	+0 to base
Chainmail comes with plates	+0 to base	+0 to base	+1 to base
Chainmail, <i>mithril</i>	+ 5 to chainmail's value		
ATTACKER'S WEAPON			
Armed, one-handed or Ranged, bows	+0	+0	+0
Armed, two-handed	-1	-1	-1
Ranged, thrown	+1	+0	+0
Unarmed	+2	N/A	N/A

natively, a character may make a Called Shot targeted to a specific body part, see below). Roll 2d6 to learn where the Critical Strike hits and which table has to be consulted:

CS 1.2: RANDOM HIT LOCATION

2D6	BODY PART
2	Head/Neck Critical
3	Foot Critical (1d6: left foot on 1 to 3, right foot on 4 to 6)
4	Hand Critical (as foot, or with shield: a 6 hits shield hand)
5-6	Leg Critical (a 5 hits the "far" leg, a 6 hits the "near" leg)
7-8	Torso Critical
9	Weapon Arm Critical
10	Torso Critical
11	Shield Arm Critical
12	Head/Neck Critical

If a character wants to make a Called Shot (also see Core Book, p.232) to a specific body part, apply the following modifiers (note that these modifiers already count in the threshold for a light Critical Strike):

CS 1.3: CALLED SHOT MODIFIERS

BODY PART	TN	BODY PART	TN
Head	+6	Foot	+4
Weapon Hand	+4	Shield Hand	+7
Weapon Arm	+3	Shield Arm	+4
Leg	+2	Torso	+0

If a character aims his strike against a body part not protected by armour, take the "No Armour" test modifiers from Table CS 1.1 and add the appropriate test modifier from Table CS 1.3 for the body part he intends to hit. If a foe wears a helmet, take his general armour class and calculate the TN from that basis, but ignore the test modifiers for wearing a hauberk (this only protects the legs) or plates (they protect arms and legs).

However, there is one major drawback with a Called Shot: if the character fails to reach or exceed the TN established for at least a Light critical, he entirely misses his target and doesn't do any damage. (Note that this only holds true for a Called Shot. Of course, a normal attack still inflicts your weapon's regular damage if the test result beats foe's Defence and if he fails to parry or dodge the strike, even if you don't score a critical.)

EXAMPLE: *Let's assume your opponent is wearing an ordinary chainmail hauberk, reinforced with plates, and a helmet. His Defence is 10. The TN to hit this target's head is 24: Defence 10, +6 for the Called Shot to the head, and +8 for at least a Light Critical Strike against a foe with an ordinary chainmail who is also wearing a helmet (remember, the modifiers for having the hauberk type of armour and for plates do not*

apply to *Called Shots to the head*). If the attacker does not meet TN 24, he does no damage at all, even if his attack test exceeds the target's Defence. If the attack roll even meets a TN of 26 or 29, he inflicts a Medium or a Severe critical, respectively. If the attacker had aimed to the torso, the TN for inflicting a Light critical would have been $10+0+8+1 = 19$, while scoring a Medium or a Severe critical requires to beat a TN of 21 or 24, respectively.

EFFECTS OF CRITICALS

Most criticals give very specific damage to targets who receive them. You should note the exact type of any severe injury inflicted to a character who isn't killed right away, because it may be crucial to know which body part has been injured when the character tries to perform a certain action (e.g., running with a crippled leg). Sometimes it might be necessary to record the number of wounds sustained, too. As soon as this number of wounds is regained, the injury is healed. Injuries naturally heal according to their degree of severity, i.e. the harmless ones are healed first, the worst at last.

There are certain other results which either wear off automatically after a given time (i.e. if a character is "numb") or have to be treated with a Healing test.

A "numb" character may not attack for the indicated number of actions or rounds, and may only parry, block or dodge at -4. If an entry says the target is numb and can't parry for the duration of numbness, the character can't take any defensive or offensive actions other than running away at half his movement rate.

If an entry says the target received a bleeding wound, he will sustain the number of wounds indicated every round until the injury is healed. This damage starts the round after the critical is delivered. The TN for a Healing test to treat an injury bleeding for one wound per round is 5. This increases by +5 TN for each additional wound lost due bleeding per round (i.e., an injury bleeding for three wounds per round requires a Healing test at TN 15).

MISCELLANEOUS RULES

ARMOUR

As stated above, regular weapon damage is rolled for after the critical is resolved. This is primarily done for simplicity's sake, since a critical can kill a foe right away. However, any additional damage indicated by a non-lethal Critical Strike result can't be absorbed by armour.

SPENDING COURAGE

An attacker may never spend Courage points for the resolution of a Critical Strike (i.e., to raise the result of 2d6), but he may use it to increase the attack roll in order to score a critical.

A character who is the victim of a Critical Strike and wants to change its result may permanently remove one Courage point and have the Narrator re-roll the critical. However, this second result cannot be re-rolled or changed by any other means.

ENCHANTED & MASTERWORK ITEMS

A result referring to the destruction of equipment (marked with a '*' in the description) means that a non-enchanted, non-masterwork item is automatically destroyed. To destroy masterwork or enchanted weapons, armours or shields usually requires that Defence is beaten by 21 or 31, respectively. If Defence is not beaten by that amount, the equipment instead flies 1d6 yards through the air and lands at a random location (use hex paper and 1d6).

SIZE & ELEVATION

In close combat, for attackers who are smaller than their foe, the TN to hit the head or the arms is +4 per size level difference (in addition to the standard Called Shot modifiers as given in Table CS 1.3). However, don't forget the general -2 TN test bonus a smaller character receives against larger opponents. If hit body parts are determined randomly, re-roll any results that indicate a Critical Strike to the head or an arm or replace them with strikes to the torso or a leg respectively. Inflicting a critical against a smaller foe is not harder than against one of equal size. Only the standard +2 TN modifier (see Core Book, p.219) per size level difference applies.

If there is a significant difference in elevation between two combatants, the random roll for determining the hit location (Table CS 1.2) should be modified by +1 for every two feet an attacker is standing above the defender (to a maximum of 12), respectively by -1 for every two feet the attacker is standing below his opponent (to a minimum of 3).

Some very large or tough natural beasts or demons cannot be hit critically as easy as humanoid foes. As a rule of thumb, increase TNs to inflict a critical against a creature such as an bear by +1 or +2, depending on its size and hide. Fighting a dragon or a Balrog, a TN modifier between +3 to +6 may be appropriate, again depending on the actual size of the creature and its hide. Some of these creatures could be largely immune to critical strikes inflicted by non-enchanted weapons, while others might suffer even worse effects from such weapons. In both cases, the Narrator should rather modify the roll on the Critical Strike table instead of the TN for the attack test. A modification between -6 (target is virtual immune against this kind of attack) to +3 (target is very vulnerable to this kind of attack) is fairly reasonable. It is also recommended to change the descriptions of criticals against such creatures, although most effects – except for numbness – can remain the same. A Balrog or a dragon can never be stunned or become numb.

SPELL ATTACKS

To score a Critical Strike with a spell attack, the spell's description must warrant it, either by Narrator's discretion or because it includes the line "normal rules for extra success on attack tests apply" or similar wording. In this case, it may be nice to change the descriptions of the damage a little bit, perhaps including burning clothes, lost hair or cauterised limbs. See Core Book, p.245, for additional fire damage rules. A spell attack can usually be treated like a torch or a campfire, with a +5 TN modifier to put out the flames. Burning clothes or hairs extinguish automatically after 1/2d6 rounds.

SCARS

Note that Elves do not get scars due to their superior racial recovery.