Christopher Hammock's Talisman House Rules
version 5.0

Copyright 2002 by Christopher Hammock

Adventure Deck Construction

A common complaint about Talisman is that the Adventure deck is too random and arbitrary - simple luck of the draw often dictates the course of the game. To address this problem, the Adventure deck should be split into two, one for the Outer Region and one for the Middle Region. Because the Middle Region is meant to be more challenging, the more powerful Enemies are placed there, as well as the more powerful Objects. This ensures that a character won't get slaughtered early on by Demons and Dragons, nor will he become an instant god by drawing the Ring, Runesword and a nice suit of Armor. It also ensures that a character won't get lame draws like Goblins and Helmets later in the Middle Region.

The division of cards should be as follows:

a) Enemies with a Strength or Craft of 6 or less are placed in the Outer Region deck; those with a Strength or Craft of 7 or greater are placed in the Middle Region deck.

b) Objects or Followers that add 1 to Strength or Craft are placed in the Outer Region deck (e.g. Axe, Magic Belt). Objects or Followers that can add more than 1 point to Strength and/or Craft are placed in the Middle Region deck (e.g. Ring, Holy Lance). Objects that provide additional powerful benefits are placed in the Middle Region deck (e.g. Rune Sword).

c) Cards for one Bag of Gold are placed in the Outer Region deck. Cards for two Bags of Gold and special cards which give larger amounts of Gold are placed in the Middle Region.

d) If the effect of a card is tied to a specific space (e.g. Raiders, Water Bottle, Magic Tankard) then that card is placed in the deck for the Region that space is in. The Dungeon can be considered an alternate route to the Middle Region, so Dungeon Doorways should be placed in the Outer Region deck.

e) All other cards are placed in the deck judged more appropriate for their degree of power or inconvenience.

The composition of the Adventure decks (and decks for other boards) should also be controlled. With all the official and unofficial cards available, simply throwing everything in can make the game slow. Cards can be divided into three categories: Enemies, Assets and Miscellaneous cards. The deck should include one part Enemies, one to two parts Assets (the fewer Asset cards the nastier the deck) and one part Miscellaneous cards.

a) Enemies are any monsters fighting with Strength (2) or Craft (3). Monsters fighting with Strength should make up two-thirds of Enemies in the deck and monsters fighting with Craft should make up one-third of the Enemies.

b) Assets are all Objects, Followers and Bags of Gold (5). Bags of Gold should make up one-third to one-half of Assets in the deck.

c) Miscellaneous cards are Events (1), Strangers (4) and Places (6).   The distribution of cards among the three types is unimportant.

Equipping Objects

This system modifies slightly the way a character's inventory of Objects is tracked and what Objects a character can use. In addition to the backpack capacity of four Objects, each character now has five slots, each of which can only be filled by an Object of a specific type. These five slots are: Helmet, Ring, Weapon, Armor and Shield. The character sheet at the end of this document can be used to facilitate this.

Each of the five equipment slots can only be occupied by an Object of the appropriate type. Additionally, Objects of these types may only be used (or benefits derived from them) if they are currently equipped in the appropriate slot. For example, if a character has both Solomon's Crown and a Helmet, then only one of the two can be worn at a given time; the benefits of the other cannot be counted while it is kept elsewhere.

A character may exchange Objects he has equipped for other Objects elsewhere in his inventory only at the beginning of his Turn, before rolling the die for Movement. If an Object is aquired during play, it may be equipped immediately only if that slot is currently empty. Otherwise, the Object must be placed elsewhere in inventory and swapped in on the next Turn.

The assignment of Object types to currently existing cards is arbitrary. Weapons, helmets, shields and armor are obvious. Anything with "Ring" in its name should be treated as a Ring-type Object. Anything that is obviously worn on the head should be treated as a Helmet-type Object. Other Objects can be decided upon by individual groups. For example the Combat Enviro Suit and the Dragonwing Cape are both Objects worn on the body and could be treated as Armor-type Objects, while the Wand and the Staff of Mastery are held in the hand and could be treated as Weapon-type Objects.

To summarize, a character's inventory of Objects may include all the following:
a) a Helmet, Armor, Ring and either a Weapon and Shield or a two-handed Weapon (equipped).
b) four other Objects carried in a backpack (ten if a Bag of Carrying is among them).
c) four other Objects carried by a Porter. You may have any number of Porters. You may give a Bag of Carrying to a Porter to increase his capacity to ten Objects.
d) further Objects carried by a pack animal (any Animal Follower that can carry Objects for you): eight on a Mule or twelve on a Horse and Cart (optional rule: you may only have one pack animal at a time).

Strength Requirements for Weapons and Armor

To increase the realism of the game, apply the following Strength requirements in order to use (not necessarily carry) these Objects:

Helmet: Str-2	Staff: none
Shield: Str-4	Sword: Str-2
Armor: Str-6	Axe: Str-3
Full-Face Helm: Str-4	Two-Handed Sword: Str-4
Kite Shield: Str-6	Greataxe: Str-5
Plate Mail: Str-8	Morning Star: Str-6
Magic Helmet: Str-2	Mace: Str-4
Magic Shield: Str-4	Lance: Str-3
Dragonscale Shirt: Str-6	

Special weapons have the same minimum Strength as the normal weapon of the same type. So, for exmple, the Runesword is treated as a sword, the Holy Lance as a lance, Grimnir's Axe as an axe, etc...

If you are using different Adventure decks for the Outer and Middle Regions, put Helmets, Shields and Armor in the Outer Region deck and the Magic Helmet, Magic Shield and Dragonscale Shirt in the Middle Region deck. Keep the Full-Face Helm, Kite Shield and Plate Mail available for purchase in the City, Dark Forest or Grim Crags boards.

Armor Rating

Armor Rating (AR) replaces the standard rules for preventing the loss of a life after Combat that applies to Helmets, Shields and Armour. Under the current rule, only one defensive Object may be checked against, so that having a Helmet, Shield and Armor is no better than having just Armor. These rules allow protection from multiple Objects.

If you are forced to lose a Life after being defeated in Combat, you may roll against your Armor Rating to see if you were protected. Add up the Armor Ratings provided by your Helmet, Shield and Armor (and possibly other Objects) to determine your total Armor Rating; if the total is greater than 5, treat it as 5. If you roll equal to or below your Armor Rating on one die, then your equipment protected you and you do not lose a Life. The Armor Ratings of various Objects are:

Helmet: AR-1	Full-Face Helm: AR-2	Magic Helmet: AR-2
Shield: AR-1	Kite Shield: AR-2	Magic Shield: AR-2
Armor: AR-2	Plate Mail: AR-3	Dragonscale Shirt: AR-3

Enemies may also have Armor Ratings; if such an Enemy is defeated, check to see if its defenses prevent it from being killed.

Hirelings

A Hireling card is a Follower that can be aquired at certain points in the game from a stock deck, much the same way that Purchase cards are Objects that can be aquired from a stock deck. Hirelings in play are treated as Followers in every way except that if they are killed they are returned to the Hireling deck rather than being discarded.

Hirelings are normally hired in specific spaces on the board or at Place cards. They should all cost at least two Bags of Gold to prevent them from becoming a cheap substitute for Lives (Dark Elf, Vampire's Tower, etc...).

Bribing Followers

If you land on a space occupied by another character, you may attempt to bribe one of the character's Followers to join you; this is considered an Encounter with that character. To bribe, you first nominate one of the target character's Followers and then discard 1 to 6 Gold. Roll one die; if the roll is equal to or less than the amount of Gold discarded, take the Follower. Otherwise, there is no effect; your Gold is lost and your Turn ends. You may not bribe Animal Followers. You may not bribe a Follower your are ineligible to have (for whatever reason). If a character loses a Porter to bribery, he must immediately rearrange his Objects within his remaining inventory space. Any excess Objects must be dropped and may be picked up by the player who did the bribing.

Roleplaying Alignment

Under the standard rules, a character's Alignment is a very superficial attribute. For those who wish to add a little depth to game play, here are some simple rules to constrain the actions of characters by their Alignment. This only applies when a character lands on a space occupied by another character and must decide whether or not to encounter the character.

- A Good character may only encounter another character if that character is Evil.

- A Neutral character has no constraint.

- An Evil character MUST encounter another character (of any Alignment) that he lands on.

This covers any and all forms of encounter, including attacking, bribing a Follower, casting a Spell or using a Special Ability. Use of this rule can complicate play when it is first introduced, but it greatly enhances the roleplaying aspect of the game.

Miscellaneous Rules

Characters

1: Enemies defeated in Combat may be exchanged in the usual manner for one Life instead of one Strength.

2: Enemies defeated in Psychic Combat may be exchanged for one Craft or one Spell in the same manner as Enemies defeated in Combat.

3: A character's native attributes (Strength and Craft) may not be raised above twice their starting value by any means. Effective attributes may still be raised by Objects or Followers. When an attribute has reached its maximum, Enemies defeated using that attribute may still be exchanged at the usual rate to purchase one Life or one Spell.

4: A character's number of Lives may not exceed twice its starting value.

Objects and Followers

1: Mules, Horses, Warhorses and Horses and Carts are considered Animal Followers.

Enemies

1: Enemy type (Monster or Spirit) need not be directly coupled with the attribute used for fighting. Therefore, new cards can be created depicting Monsters that attack in Psychic Combat and Spirits that attack in Combat. The designation "Monster" simply means anything natural (biological or mechanical), while "Spirit" means anything supernatural (demonic, undead, magical or elemental).

Game Play

1: Talismans shall not come into play except through the Warlock's quests. Talismans and other cards whose sole purpose is to bring Talismans into play (e.g.: Hermit, Eagle's Lair) should not be included in the Adventure decks. If a Talisman should be the result of a random roll (e.g.: Temple, Casket), roll again.

2: No method of teleporting shall bring a Character into the Inner Region from outside it. Consider any such instruction to bring the Character to the Portal of Power.

3: In the Werewolf's Den, roll two dice to determine the Werewolf's Craft and fight him in Psychic Combat instead of regular Combat.

4: Do not use Alternative Endings, as they are usually either tedious or anti-climactic; the final space on the board is the Crown of Command as per the original rules.

Spell Modifications

Fireball: Ignore the listed Strength. Instead, consider the Strength of the Fireball to be equal to the Craft of the Character casting it.

Destroy Magic: This Spell may be cast as required. It counters any Spell that was just cast. Until the start of your next Turn, Spells may not be cast and Magic Objects may not be used.

Magic Shell: This Spell may be cast as required and protects the caster, his Objects and Followers from any Spell or other magic that was just used. This protection lasts until the beginning of the caster's next Turn. The caster may neither cast Spells nor use Magic Objects until the effect expires.

Restoration: This can reverse any effect of any Event for its caster, not just the loss of an Adventure Card and not just for an Event drawn by the caster.