



THE

SAMURAI!



## AN HONORABLE NPC

(Editor's note: In response to numerous requests from readers for information about Samurai warriors for use in an AD&D™ or D&D® game, presented below is just such an article. The author is Anthony Salva, who holds a first-degree black belt in Hapkido, a Korean martial art. He describes his interpretation of the Samurai as "an attempt to realistically portray the art of Hapkido. All the techniques are as valid as possible.")

An earlier interpretation of the Samurai, created by Mike Childers and Jeff Key, appeared in issue #3 of DRAGON™ magazine (October 1976). Mr. Salva's article differs from the earlier one in many major aspects, and is not designed as an expansion or extension of the original article. It is possible that readers with access to the earlier article may find ways to combine certain aspects of each description.

In accordance with this magazine's policy, the Samurai is

presented as a non-player character — a personality which the DM may use to provide players with variety and new challenges, but not one which the players themselves should be able to assume as a player character. Allowing one or more players to use Samurai characters could seriously unbalance an adventure or an entire campaign if precautionary measures are not taken to prevent such unbalancing.)

by Anthony Salva

The Samurai Warrior class is a subclass of the Fighter class. Characters use the combat and saving-throw tables for Fighters. Minimum scores of 15 Strength, 17 Dexterity and 15 Intelligence must be possessed for a character to be a Samurai. A 10% bonus to earned experience is gained by a Samurai with 18 Dexterity and 17 or 18 Strength.

A Samurai may be one of the following races: gnome, halfling, elf, half-elf or human. A gnome, halfling or elf without an 18 Dexterity and 17 Strength is limited to the 9th level of experience. Other Samurai may progress as far as 12th level, the highest level a Samurai can attain.

A Samurai may not use any armor at all, because the proper exercise of his art requires the ability to move quickly and effortlessly. A character's base armor class improves as he advances in levels; an otherwise unprotected Samurai has an armor class of 9 at first level, and it improves by one with every four levels of advancement beyond first level. Even magical armor is prohibited to a Samurai; aside from this, all magic items usable by Fighters can be employed by Samurai. A Samurai may use rings and cloaks of protection, *Displacer Cloaks*, *Bracers of Defense*, or any similar item which provides the effect of wearing armor without hindering movement.

Normal weapons usable by a samurai include the two-handed sword, the short sword, the bow and the staff. A Samurai of fourth level or higher will have an opportunity to obtain and possess his personal weapons, all of which are held sacred by him. The weapons of honor — Katana, Wakizashi and Nunchakos — are described further under section "C" of Special Abilities and Techniques (below).

SAMURAI EXPERIENCE TABLE

Experience Points	Experience Level	6-sided Dice for Accumulated Hit Points	Level Title
0-3,000	1	2	White belt
3,001-6,000	2	3	Yellow belt
6,001-15,000	3	4	Blue belt
15,001-30,000	4	5	Brown belt
30,001-55,000	5	6	Samurai (Black belt, 1st Dan)
55,001-110,000	6	7	Master Samurai (Black, 2nd Dan)
110,001-250,000	7	8	Ninja (Black, 3rd Dan)
250,001-450,000	8	9	Hatamoto (Black, 4th Dan)
450,001-900,000	9	10	Daimyo (Black, 5th Dan)
900,001-1,400,000	10	11	Tai-Pan (Black, 6th Dan)
1,400,001-2,000,000	11	12	Taiko (Black, 7th Dan)
2,000,001+	12	13	Shogun (Black belt, red sash)

SAMURAI ABILITIES TABLE

Experience Level	Armor Class	Damage/Attack:		Attacks per Round	Special Abilities and Techniques
		Side Kick	Chop		
1	9	1-8	1-4	1	— — —
2	9	2-8	1-6	1	A
3	9	2-8	1-6	1	B
4	9	1-10	1-6	1	C
5	8	1-12	2-8	1	D
6	8	2-12	1-10	1	E
7	8	2-12	1-10	3/2	F
8	8	2-12	1-10	3/2	G
9	7	3-12	2-12	3/2	H
10	7	2-16	3-12	3/2	I
11	7	4-16	2-16	3/2	J
12	7	3-18	4-16	3/2	K

### Special Abilities and Techniques

**A) Jump Front Kick:** This is a leaping heel kick to the opponent's chest or head. The leap can be as great as the height of the Samurai attempting the kick, in either a vertical or horizontal

direction; thus, a Samurai who is 6 feet tall can employ a jump front kick against a foe who presents a target no higher than 6 feet above the surface the Samurai is standing on and no further than 6 feet away. This kick may only be employed once every two melee rounds, and may not immediately precede or follow a side kick. A jump front kick attack is attempted at -3 to the Samurai's "to hit" roll, and if a hit is scored the kick does 2-12 points of damage.

**B) Judo Throw:** This attack may be used against any character or creature attempting to overbear or grapple with the Samurai, as long as the opponent's height does not exceed three times the Samurai's height. This also applies to any creature which might jump on the Samurai from above, as long as the foe is not smaller than half of the Samurai's height. The judo throw can be performed at any time, if the proper "to hit" roll is made, when such an action is deemed appropriate or necessary. It is done by grabbing the opponent's upper torso, planting one foot in the lower torso, then falling back and kicking upward with that foot, tossing the opponent backward over the Samurai's head. The throw does an automatic 2 points of damage to any opponent except another Samurai, who would have the ability to roll through the fall and resume a standing position without being injured. Any other opponent will need one round to regain a standing position, and during that round the Samurai will attack at +2 "to hit" on each attack he makes.

**C) Ceremony of Fealty; The Weapons of Honor:** Upon attaining fourth level, a Samurai will receive his personal Weapons of Honor from his liege lord. This presentation is part of the Ceremony of Fealty, which occurs when a Samurai is summoned by the Shogun of his alignment to become the vassal of that leader. In return for taking the vows of fealty, the Samurai receives his personal Katana, Wakizashi and Nunchakos.

The Katana (long two-handed sword) and Wakizashi (short sword) are both made of intricately engraved handles attached to slightly curved blades and are encased in wooden scabbards. The Nunchakos are two extremely hard and durable staves of wood, each 14 inches long, attached to each other at the ends by a five-inch length of rope; this device is so difficult to manipulate that no Samurai of less than fourth level will be able to use the weapon.

All Weapons of Honor are usable by all Samurai who are able to employ such weapons; for instance, a Samurai of third level or lower who acquires a Katana or Wakizashi (from a dead warrior) will be able to use the weapons at the damage figures outlined on the table below. However, non-Samurai characters who acquire one of the Weapons of Honor will find that the Katana performs as a normal long sword and the Wakizashi causes damage as a normal short sword when used by those characters. Except in very rare instances, only a Samurai character may use the Nunchakos with any success whatsoever.

The Weapons of Honor

	Length	Width	Weight	Speed	Damage vs. Opp.	
Katana	5'	2"	80 gp	5	1-12	1-20
	3'	1½"	50 gp	5	1-10	3-18
Wakizashi	2'	1"	30 gp	2	2-8	1-12
	1'	1"	20 gp	2	1-8	1-10
Nunchakos	14"	1"	10 gp	2	1-8	1-12

Note: The smaller versions of the Katana and Wakizashi are designed for use by Samurai who are 4½ feet in height or shorter.

**D) Sweep (Knockdown) and Double Chop:** At fifth level, a Samurai acquires the ability to perform these two combat maneuvers. The Sweep is performed by stepping to one side of the opponent, grabbing his upper torso and knocking his feet out from under him with the Samurai's front foot. The knockdown does 1 point of damage (if "to hit" roll is made), and because the opponent must take the next melee round to stand up, the Samurai will strike at +2 "to hit" in that round, just as with a Judo Throw. The Samurai receives +1 "to hit" the first time a Sweep is



attempted against a particular opponent, and -2 "to hit" for each subsequent Sweep attempt against the same opponent. In order for the Samurai to use this technique, the opponent must be bipedal and not more than twice as tall as the Samurai. If another Samurai is the intended victim of a Sweep, the opponent may attempt to counter the move and reverse it, at -3 on the "to hit" roll for such an attempt.

The Double Chop is a variation of the chop attack in which the same arm makes a continuous "figure 8" motion, striking the opponent in the same location twice in rapid succession. If a normal "to hit" roll is made as for a normal chop, then damage is rolled separately for each blow. This attack cannot be used in two successive melee rounds.

**E) Crescent Kick/Side Kick Combination:** The Crescent Kick (a circular kick that strikes with the inside part of the foot) is directed toward the opponent's weapon hand. If it hits, the weapon is knocked out of the opponent's hand, and the Samurai follows with an immediate, automatic Side Kick (no "to hit" roll is required) as part of the same attack. The Crescent Kick is performed at -2 "to hit" and does an automatic 1 point of damage if it hits. Damage for the Side Kick is determined separately, according to the Samurai's experience level. The Crescent Kick/Side Kick Combination cannot be used in the round before or after another form of kicking attack is employed.

**F) Back Roundhouse Kick:** This is a spinning back kick that strikes with the heel of the foot anywhere on the opponent's body. It is done at -3 "to hit" and does 3-18 points of damage if a successful hit is scored. Like other kicking attacks, it may not be performed in two successive rounds and cannot be used in combination with other kicking attacks immediately preceding it or following it.

**G) Illusionist Spell Ability:** Beginning at 8th level, a Samurai gains the ability to learn Illusionist spells. This ability increases by level, so that a 12th-level Shogun has the same number of spells usable as a 5th-level Illusionist.

**H) "360" & Downward Kick:** The "360" is a knockdown technique that is accomplished by grasping the opponent's hand and spinning oneself in a tight circle, twisting the opponent's wrist and making him fall to the ground. The Downward Kick is then directed toward the downed opponent's head or torso. The "360" is attempted at -3 "to hit" and does 1-6 points of damage if successfully performed, with a 30% chance of breaking the opponent's wrist if the "to hit" roll succeeds. If the "360" succeeds in forcing the opponent to the ground, the Downward

Kick is attempted at +3 "to hit" and does the damage of a Side Kick if it succeeds. As with other attack forms involving a knockdown, the Samurai can attack at +2 "to hit" in the round immediately following the knockdown, except against another Samurai.

**I) The Slaying Hand:** This power is usable once per month by a Samurai of 10th level or higher, and may not be employed against these types of characters and creatures: all undead, all creatures who can be hit only by magical weapons, all creatures or characters with more than twice the number of hit dice as the Samurai, or any other Samurai of 10th level or higher.

When successfully applied, the power induces vibrations in the opponent's body as soon as the Samurai touches his foe. The vibrations will cause death, either instantaneously or as long as a month after the touching, depending on the frequency of the vibration (which is under the control of the Samurai).

The use of the power requires the Samurai to remain absolutely still and in total concentration for three rounds, after which the touching of the intended victim (by making a "to hit" roll when the victim is within touching range) must be accomplished within two rounds. If the Samurai's concentration is broken during the three rounds of preparation (treat as if the character were casting a spell) or if the Samurai fails to touch a victim within two rounds after preparing the attack, the power is dissipated and cannot be attempted again for a month.

**J) Flying Side Kick:** This attack is essentially identical to the normal Side Kick, except that movement space is required, and the damage potential is greater because of the momentum caused by the leap. To perform a Flying Side Kick, the Samurai must be positioned at least five feet away from the target, and no further away than  $2\frac{1}{2}$  times the Samurai's height. The kick is attempted at -3 "to hit" and does 1-20 points of damage if successful. It may not be employed in two successive rounds.

**K) Psionic Ability:** A Samurai who ascends to the rank of Shogun has a base 25% chance to gain 30 points of psionic ability (roll for attack/defense modes and strength as per *Players Handbook*). If a character who already possesses psionics achieves 12th level, the 30 points may be added to the already existing number.

## The Samurai philosophy

Samurai have a strong sense of honor and dignity. If a Samurai is humiliated or dishonored in any way (such as being bound and gagged or having his weapons stolen), he is compelled to seek immediate and absolute revenge, according to *Bushido*, "The Way of the Warrior." In order for a Samurai's honor to be restored, he must either obliterate his foe or die in the attempt. If he fails to defeat and destroy his foe, the Samurai is further dishonored and must, according to *Bushido*, immediately commit *seppuku*, or ritual suicide.

The procedure for *seppuku* consists of grasping the Wakizashi in the left hand (if a Samurai's personal short sword is unavailable for this purpose, a normal dagger or short sword may be used — but this further increases the Samurai's dishonor), thrusting it into the lower abdomen and cutting upwards, then stabbing into the right side of the stomach and slicing to the left side, and finishing by slitting the throat.

This is the only honorable way for a Samurai to die, other than death in battle (which could also be dishonorable, depending on the circumstances). A warrior of third level or lower is able to be resurrected, no matter what the cause or circumstances of his death; however, if a Samurai of fourth level or higher has died a dishonorable death, he is considered to have broken his vow to *Bushido* and cannot automatically be resurrected. If a dead Samurai's comrades and constituents feel there is no clear-cut way to determine whether his death was honorable or not, they may appeal to the Samurai's liege lord (the Shogun of the same alignment as the Samurai) for a judgement. There is a base chance of 5% per point of Charisma of the dead Samurai that the liege lord will grant the constituents an audience. If their plea is heard, there is a base chance of 5% per each experience level

above third of the dead Samurai that the constituents' appeal will be granted by the lord, and the Samurai will be able to be resurrected. Both of these chances for success should be modified at the DM's discretion, depending on the circumstances.

*Bushido* also demands that once a Samurai's Katana or Wakizashi blade is unsheathed, it should not be returned to its scabbard unbloodied. The warrior's code also forbids the use of poison as a cowardly and dishonorable act.

Because a Samurai of third level or below has not yet taken his vows to abide by *Bushido*, he is not bound to uphold the code. He may be resurrected regardless of the circumstances of his death, but his actions in life and the way of his death will have a bearing on how well he is received by his superiors when he is called to take his vows at fourth level.

A Samurai may belong to one of five specific alignments: true neutral, lawful neutral, neutral good, chaotic neutral or neutral evil. Each of these alignments denotes a particular organization within the Samurai class. There may be only five Shoguns at one time, one for each alignment type, but there can be an unlimited number of Samurai of each alignment at any lower level.

When a Taiko (11th-level) acquires enough experience points to advance to 12th level (Shogun), the conflict must be resolved by a duel to the death between the characters, or by one or the other committing *seppuku*. In organizations of certain alignments, it is possible that the Shogun will be required to commit *seppuku* as soon as an heir acquires enough experience points to replace him. If a Taiko is compelled to have combat with a reigning Shogun, he must either comply or immediately commit *seppuku*.

A new Shogun will automatically acquire all the material possessions of the former Shogun. The vassals of the former Shogun are not obligated to the new Shogun in any way, but most will swear fealty to him rather than become *ronin* (a Samurai who has no liege lord).

With the Shogunate goes the ultimate responsibility for fulfil-

ling the purpose of that organization: the domination of all other Samurai organizations (alignments), by force if necessary. The Shogun who is the head of the superior organization earns the right to wear the purple sash as Emperor of all Samurai for the duration of his reign and his alignment's supremacy.

#### Thieving abilities and combat

A Samurai's training enables him to block attacks by non-edged projectile weapons by making a successful save vs. petrification. Because of his tumbling and gymnastic abilities, a Samurai is able to fall a distance of five feet per each two experience levels without sustaining damage. The ability begins at second level, increases to 10 feet at 4th level, 15 feet at 6th level, 20 feet at 8th level, 25 feet at 10th level and 30 feet at 12th level.

A Samurai relies on stealth much like a Thief does, and possesses the Thief abilities to Hide in Shadows and Move Silently, with the same chance of success as a Thief of equivalent level. Beginning at fourth level, a Samurai gains the ability to Read Languages like a Thief because of his studies in ancient customs and archaic knowledge. Again, the chance for success increases by level just as it does for a Thief.

Besides being able to attack with a weapon, a Samurai can employ two basic means of weaponless attack, the side kick and the chop. Damage caused by these attack forms increases as a Samurai gains higher levels, as outlined in the Samurai Abilities and Techniques table.

Using a side kick is a strenuous activity which can only be attempted once in two successive melee rounds; thus, this attack form can only be used in combination with a weapon attack or another weaponless attack, such as a chop or one of the special techniques.

A Samurai is able to dive and roll over any obstruction which is not taller than three-fourths of his height or longer than 2½ times his height.

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