

Even the Bad Get Better

Criminal experience in the VILLAINS & VIGILANTES™ game

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How do villains in Fantasy Games Unlimited's VILLAINS & VIGILANTES™ game gain experience? Surely they improve in ability just as heroes do, but how can this improvement be measured or calculated?

In the two years I have played V&V, certain villains have appeared which my players' characters expect to fight every so often. If these villains never became more skilled or talented, then the point would come when the heroes would become too much of a match for them. What is to be done? Must the villains retire or move to another city where they can try their nefarious acts against those citizens defended by less-experienced heroes? The answer is *no*.

Heroes receive experience in basically three ways. First, they gain experience by defeating super-powered villains and their henchmen. Experience points are awarded to them in this manner based upon the following formula: (villain's hit points + villain's Power score) x (villain's level x 2) = XP. Second, heroes have the option of donating the reward money they earn to gain experience points. Experience points are then calculated based upon the amount of money given to charity (1 XP/\$10 donated). Finally, the game master may award specific amounts of experience points to heroes on a case-by-case basis if they perform extraordinary deeds. Of the five ways this article presents in which villains may gain experience, the first two ways mentioned are the basis for three of the new methods.

The five methods by which villains (NPCs or PCs) can gain experience are described below.

1. Catching heroes. Sometimes a villain may capture a solo hero or a group of heroes. This is certainly a feat and seems deserving of experience. When experience points are awarded to villains for this action, use the same formula used for heroes who capture villains, as described above. The only difference is that the experience total should be divided by

two; otherwise, the accumulated experience might become so much that the villain would gain an inordinate amount. After all, the game master is controlling the bad guys.

2. Killing heroes. There are certain villains who are so very evil and vile that they make the killing of heroes a habit. Such villains should receive the full amount of experience for any hero slain in combat with the villains. If the villain slays an incapacitated hero, he should only receive half the experience value due him. Be careful not to use too many killer villains, as this may disrupt the campaign by driving out players.

3. Killing citizens. Villains should also receive experience for killing normal people — pedestrians, bus drivers, secretaries, etc. If the experience gained from such actions were calculated with the normal formula, it would be an outrageous amount. If we assume 40 Power (10 each in strength, endurance, intelligence and agility) and the resulting 4 hit points to represent the average man on the street, then think about how much experience a villain could gain by destroying a commercial airplane with 200 people on board! Even if this figure were divided in half, as done above, the experience-point award would still be outrageous. This is enough experience to progress a beginning villain several levels at once. It is suggested that only 5 XP be established as the experience award per normal citizen death. This is more within the realm of reason.

By placing an experience-point value on the regular man, villains gain the incentive to cause the harm and havoc for which they are justly notorious. It also causes all concerned heroes to keep a more watchful eye out for their foes. Game referees should use this method of gaining experience with care, too; heroes should usually get a chance to prevent the havoc that villains want so badly to unleash.

4. Stealing money. Then, of course, there are the traditional bank robberies. If heroes gain experience points for the money that they donate to charity,

shouldn't villains gain experience points for the money that they steal? But, again, the number of experience points gained could become outrageous. Therefore, 1 XP will be gained for each \$100 stolen, extorted, etc., to keep the figure down. If you find that this still creates a larger than reasonable chunk of experience for the NPC villain, then you may opt to give experience points only for the money which is stolen and invested in criminal activities.

5. Destroying landmarks. What about the villain who threatens the White House or the Eiffel Tower? Villains who destroy landmarks that are cherished and beloved by humanity are certainly deserving of experience for their actions. In order to facilitate the calculation of the gained experience points, the term "Landmark Point" (LP) is created. One LP is worth 100 XP. If a villain destroys a building or landmark worth 3 LPs, he receives 300 XPs. With any new rating, a rating system must be provided; in this case, the game referee is the arbiter on how many LPs a particular landmark is worth. Assume that a home is worth 1 LP or less; an elaborate mansion is equal to 2 LPs; a college campus, 3 LPs; Chicago's Museum of Science and Industry, 7 LPs (national museums may be worth more); the St. Louis Arch, 11 LPs; Hoover Dam, 16 LPs; and, the Eiffel Tower, 20 LPs. This is not to say that there are no structures worth more than 20 LPs, but the LP value should be in proportion to the popularity of the monument. Therefore, a certain baseball stadium might be worth more after its home team wins the World Series than it would in the off-season.

Hopefully, these guidelines will help keep villains up to the challenge posed by the active player-character heroes. These guidelines only cover the experience that a villain gains while in contact with the heroes. The villain may receive experience points for actions granted to him by the referee at times when heroes were not around. Therefore, experience gained between conflicts is still largely based on the discretion of the GM. Ω