

Life in the Bear's Vale

Life is good in the Vale. You are surrounded by friends and family. The seasons come in turn and the ways of life are as they have always been. During the summer all the school age children go to live with relatives in either the Stomach or the Knee so that they can attend school. You get up before the sun peeks over the mountains, do your chores and then trek to the Cathedral School with old Hermont.



In the fall school is over and you all go home to get things ready for winter. During the winter the old and weak die both human and animal and everyone waits for spring. Time is passed crafting, weaving, carving and leather working. Stories are shared, of the old days and the great feats of Old Bear. And you ask just how big Old Bear is and no one is quite sure. It's just been that long since he's been seen outside the den.



And around the fire in the deepest winter when the snow is piled the highest and the wind shrieks outside and the frost kills the elders tell the older children the whispered story of Granny Easter's funeral. This was in your great-great gran's time. Back then no one had seen a sorcerer in years and one Elder whose name is no longer even whispered dared to say a prayer over a loved one's grave. No one saw it come in the snow but it was suddenly

there, an odd teacup shaped thing flying in the air! It hovered over the grave and the Wizards cast some spell and froze everyone present. As the frozen watched they cast some horror of a spell that crept up the elder's body and slowly chewed the flesh away from his bones. They spoke at length as the gathered stood there frozen and warned that no prayers and no worship of the gods would be tolerated. They unfroze everyone and soared off in their craft. As they passed over the Den the Old Bear emerged from it. He roared his rage and picking up an enormous rock in his forepaws he flung it at the teacup. It zagged out of the way at the last moment only receiving a glancing blow and flew off leaving a smoky trail behind it. Old Bear reared on his hind legs and roared once more causing several avalanches and then dropped to all fours, turned and went back into the Den. He has not been seen outside since. And since then the Wizard's teacups come two or three times a year but they avoid the area near the Den.

Since the Wizards' return they have not been the only thing seen in the skies. Strange craft that can only be described as golden barges¹ now fly over the valley. But only once a year during the warmth of high summer. They float majestically through the sky over the valley, always starting out over the Sea of Grass² passing slowly along over the Vale just out of bowshot. As they soar



along strangely dressed people can be seen looking over the sides and a booming voice in an unknown language can be heard. Occasionally they stop, especially if something is going on in the Vale. The children always run along after the golden barge until they fall to the ground exhausted. Sometimes strange foodstuffs are dropped to them from the watchers and the children never share these with any adults.

The only visitors who are met face to face are merchants who come to the Basket to trade. They come in wooden wagons drawn by oxen. The wagons shriek as they move and it is believed that this sound keeps the minotaurs and centaurs away. Or it might be the hard men who march alongside well equipped with iron and leather from the Vale. The wagon trains are always heard well before they are seen. The only thing they really want are pieces of a shiny black stone gotten from the ogres in trade. Piles of fleeces, leather, cunningly carved woodwork and weapons are rifled through but they take hardly any of that stuff. Only the best of it which is source of immense pride for the crafter. When the slivers of stone are available, as they rarely are they make huge piles of goods in exchange. The black stone is the only thing the ogres trade to the people of the Vale for the liquor and meat produced in the Vale.



Other than these visitors and the tasks of the seasons only attacks by the ogres break up the routine. Once you're old enough to hold a bow or sling you will drill with the levy and when you get big enough to hold a spear you will stand in the shield wall with the others. First at the back but as you get better and bigger you will move up in the ranks. The land is full of spirits, mostly good but some mischievous that live in the plants, rocks, water and air. They often follow humans around aping their ways. Small offerings keep them friendly, mostly. House brownies help with chores and kobolds help the miners. Nymphs of many kinds are known, dryads, oreads, and naiads. And strange monsters roam the hills and dire creatures stalk the nights.

¹ Phaung Daw U Pagoda, Meiktila, Myanmar

² Keen eyes swear that they just suddenly appear and after sailing along the valley just as suddenly disappear.

But before this happens something odd happens in your 14th year...

The People of the Bear

The People of the Bear are the descendants of a group of survivors of the Magic Wars. He brought them to his Valley and showed them how to protect themselves from the outside world. Without exception the people of the Bear love their leader.

The Valley of the Bear is a long Alpine valley that stretches almost 100 miles from end to end. There are five large permanent sources of water in the valley which of course correspond to the locations of the five main settlements, the Basket, the Knee, the Stomach, the Reach and the Den. There is also one river known as The Leap, that runs leaping down the mountainside where it vanishes into a deep cave within the valley.

Social Structure

People live in clans organized along family lines. The head of each clan is the oldest mentally competent man or woman. Each of these clan heads sits on the local council which is overseen by a leader called a Reeve who is chosen by the settlement through an election but has to be approved by the Old Bear as well. All citizens of the Valley are trained in weapons and expected to help protect their home if they come under attack. Everyone between the ages of 16 and 50 congregate during one of the three two weeklong training sessions that take place during the year. During this time the People are trained in fighting in a shield wall and taught tactics useful for fighting ogres and giants.

Society

The People of the Bear are a tribal society, egalitarian and quite insular. The main route out of the Vale would include the Path of Skulls which can only be travelled by people carrying special tokens from Maripose very few of which are in the Vale. Virtually all of the contact with the outside world is through the traders who rarely stay long.

Economics

The People grow rye, barley and oats. They herd sheep, goats and some cattle and horses. They mine and work iron and gold. They make pottery and carve wood. One craftsman living in the Den is experimenting with glassworking but there isn't a good supply of sand in the valley. The people brew beer and do have one vineyard. They also distill alcohol.

The economy is entirely based on barter.

Warfare

The People of the Bear's main threat are ogres and giants. They only encounter minotaurs and centaurs if they leave the valley. They fight in shield walls with spears and shields to give them

an advantage against their traditional foes. The militia train in scale, long spear and medium shields. Other combinations are known. The Bearkin serve as extra heavy shock infantry.³

Valley dwellers that are ill-suited to fight in the shield wall such as mages and those not strong enough to wield axes or spears in combat serve as support staff. They wear the lightest of armour and wield slings and staffs.

Axes and spears of all kinds are the preferred weapons but scale is the heaviest armour known in the Vale. Bows and slings and thrown axes are used for ranged combat. The People ride but they never fight on horseback as the ponies they raise are ill-suited to such combat and are terribly afraid of the ogres and giants.

Languages

The People of the Bear speak a language called Common which most humans and many other races speak. There are other languages in existence. The following is a list of known languages. There is no opportunity to speak merperson.

Everyone starts off speaking Common at D8 for free.

- Ancient – the language used in sorcery.
- Shadow – an elemental language.
- Giant (spoken by ogres as well)
- Minotaur
- Centaur
- Merperson

Each language must be purchased separately. You can take the Linguist Edge to learn ½ your Smarts die in languages as well.

Character Creation

Characters are created using the Savage Worlds Adventure Edition (SWADE).

<https://www.drivethrurpg.com/en/product/261539/savage-worlds-adventure-edition>

To start most if not all of the characters should take the Youth Hindrance at either the Minor or Major level.

The hero is 12-15 years old. He has only 4 points to adjust his attributes instead of 5, and 10 skill points instead of 12. On the plus side, youths have a fair amount of luck. They draw one extra Benny at the beginning of each game session (this stacks with other Edges such Luck or Great Luck). Most Young characters should also take the Small Hindrance, but it's not mandatory.

³ Bearkin are lycanthropes and cannot be played as characters.

As a Major Hindrance, the character is Very Young (8 to 11 years old). He has only 3 points for attributes and 10 for skills, and the Small Hindrance. Very Young heroes draw two extra Bennies at the start of each session.

1) Concept

SWADE does not use character classes but you can approximate them by selecting specific skills.

Fighter

Start with Strength, Vigor, and Fighting, then pick Edges for your combat style. Take Sweep for great weapon fighters, Two-Fisted for dual wielders, Feint for swashbucklers, or Defender for "sword-and-board" types.

Ranger/Hunter/Scout

Take Shooting, Survival and the Woodsman Edge. Consider Beast Master if you want an animal companion. Take Favored Enemy and Favored Terrain to be the master of particular wilderness domains.

Rogue

This seems like an odd choice for an egalitarian, agrarian barter-based society but Old Hermont will teach interested students in these somewhat useless Skills and Edges. High Stealth and Thievery skills are must-haves, as are the Thief and Streetwise Edges. Take Sneak Attack and Assassin for backstabbers. For acrobatic thieves, take the Acrobat and Combat Acrobat Edges.

Mages

A number of arcane backgrounds are available that have limitations built in. These can be found in the Fantasy Companion. The Wizard arcane background found in the Core rules is not used.

Old Hermont⁴ can train people in the following arcane backgrounds:

- Alchemist
- Elementalist
- Illusionist
- Sorcerer
- Warlock/Witch
- Wizard

Note that these are all Smarts based backgrounds. Evil-aligned and all Spirit based arcane backgrounds are forbidden!

⁴ He seems to have skills in all of these backgrounds!

The following table shows the various arcane backgrounds.⁵ Cells with a yellow background showing possible starting arcane backgrounds⁶.

Smarts	Reaction	Smarts – Evil	Reaction	Spirit	Reaction
Alchemist	Okay	Diabolist	Feared	Bard	Forbidden
Elementalist	Nervous	Necromancer	Feared	Cleric	Forbidden
Illusionist	Okay			Druid	Forbidden
Sorcerer	Feared			Shaman	Forbidden
Summoner	Nervous				
Warlock/Witch	Feared				
Wizard	Okay				

All the options listed in the Fantasy Companion on pages 105-112 are in play.

Elementalists are usually focused on water, air or earth. Some use ice and snow as their element as well.

Crafter

Crafters are the soul and backbone of the Vale. They do all the hard work while also being trained at Fighting and Shooting. Everyone knows one or more Crafts skills.

2) Ancestries

The only ancestry available at the start of the campaign is human. Human's get any Novice Edge of their choosing.

3) Hindrances

Select up to four points of Hindrances (Major Hindrances are worth 2, Minor are worth 1).

- For 2 Hindrance points you can raise an attribute one die type, or choose an Edge.
- For 1 Hindrance point you can gain another skill point.

Note that you can take more hindrances BUT you only benefit from four points.

Hindrances can be taken either from the core rules or the Fantasy Companion.

4) Attributes

Attributes start at d4. You have 5 points to distribute among them. Each step costs 1 point. Human attributes may not be raised beyond d12.

⁵ Except Tinkerer. Just no.

⁶ I might be persuaded to allow other backgrounds IF your backstory is good enough.

5) Skills

Every character starts with 12 skill points. Each die type costs 1 point up to and equal to the linked attribute; then 2 points per step after that.

Athletics, Common Knowledge, Crafts, [specialization], Fighting, Notice, Persuasion, and Shooting and Stealth are core skills and start at d4 for free.

Skill List

Core skills are highlighted in yellow.

Skills	Notes
Academics (Smarts)	
Alchemy (Smarts)	Found in the Fantasy Companion.
Athletics (Agility)	
Battle (Smarts)	
Boating (Agility)	Unknown to the people of the Vale. No navigable bodies of water.
Common Knowledge (Smarts)	
Crafts (Smarts)	
Driving (Agility)	Doesn't exist.
Electronics (Smarts)	Doesn't exist.
Faith (Spirit)	Forbidden.
Fighting (Agility)	
Focus (Spirit)	Forbidden.
Gambling (Smarts)	
Hacking (Smarts)	Doesn't exist.
Healing (Smarts)	
Intimidation (Spirit)	
Language (Smarts)	
Notice (Smarts)	
Occult (Smarts)	
Performance (Spirit)	
Persuasion (Spirit)	
Piloting (Agility)	Doesn't exist.
Psionics (Smarts)	Forbidden.
Research (Smarts)	
Riding (Agility)	
Science (Smarts)	Rudimentary at best.
Shooting (Agility)	
Spellcasting (Smarts)	
Stealth (Agility)	
Survival (Smarts)	

Skills	Notes
Taunt (Smarts)	
Thievery (Smarts)	
Weird Science (Smarts)	Doesn't exist.

Alchemy (Smarts)

This is the arcane skill for alchemists. It can be used in place of Science when examining chemical reactions, studying reagents, and other related topics.

Familiarity

When you are faced with the unfamiliar you suffer a -2 to -4 penalty⁷ until you have a chance to familiarize yourself with t

For example: the people of the Vale all receive training in the following weapons:

- Spears,
- Hand axes, both in melee and thrown.
- Battle axes,
- Bows and slings⁸,
- Staffs,
- One and two handed straight bladed swords.

If you encounter an unfamiliar weapon, say a mace and want to use it you operate with a -2 penalty until an entire session has passed.

Example One: Ted picks up a mace during a battle because he desperately wants to bash someone's brains in. Normally his Fighting skill is a d8. For that battle his skill suffers a -2 penalty while using the mace.

Example Two: Fred, Ted's friend is even more desperate and grabs a whip. The whip is so alien that he suffers a -4 until he gets a chance to practise with it.

Crafts [specialization]

Crafts replaces the Repair skill. It includes the ability to build and repair things. Each craft skill only covers a specific category. Here's a partial list:

- Baker
- Brewer
- Candler
- Cobbler

⁷ Depending how unfamiliar the tool is.

⁸ Especially as children or if your Str is only d4.

- Cook
- Farmer
- Etc.

6) *Derived Statistics*

- **Standard Pace** is 6", but may be changed by ancestral abilities, Edges, or Hindrances.
- **Parry** is 2 plus half of Fighting.
- **Toughness** is 2 plus half of Vigor, plus any Armor.

Note the amount of armor in parentheses like this—Toughness: 11 (2). This means 2 points of the total 11 Toughness comes from Armor. An Armor Piercing attack could bypass those 2 points but not the other 9.

7) *Edges*

As humans you can take three edges. This includes the free edge humans get.

The first two Edges cost 2 Hindrance points each, the third is free.

All of the Edges found in the Core Rules and the Fantasy Companion can be taken with the exception of the following Edges:

- Ace
- Aristocrat
- Chi
- Explorer
- Fey Blood
- Gadgeteer
- Holy/Unholy Warrior
- Knight
- McGyver
- Mentalist
- Mystic Powers
- Rich and Filthy Rich
- Rock and Roll
- Scorch
- Treasure Hunter
- Two Gun Kid
- Wing Gust

The Named Weapon and Improved Named Weapon edges from Lankmar City Thieves are also available. See page 15 in that publication.

8) Gear

Characters get 500 GP of gear. Because of the egalitarian society of the vale quite a bit of this gear is pre-determined. **NB** other than the fighters in the shield wall much of this equipment is suggested rather than mandatory. The armour, shields and weapons listed below are what is commonly found/used in the Vale.

All characters start equipped with one of the following packs:

Item	Weight	Cost
Adventurer's pack ⁹	23	45
Alchemist's pack ¹⁰	31	50
Mage's pack ¹¹	16	80
Mercenary's pack ¹²	24	45
Thieves pack ¹³	19	65
Wilderness pack ¹⁴	24	36

Plus all of the following:

Item	Weight	Cost
Common clothing	2	1
Cloak (light with hood)	2	1
Winter clothing ¹⁵	3	8
Total		10

Mages are equipped as...

Type	Armour and Shields	Weapons
Alchemist	Any	Any strength allows.
Elementalist	None	Any strength allows.
Sorcerer	As light infantry or support staff	Any strength allows.
Summoner	As light infantry or support staff	Any strength allows.
Witch/Warlock	None	Any strength allows.

⁹ Notes: Backpack, bedroll, candle, chalk, common clothing, flint and steel, grappling hook, lantern, small mirror, hemp rope, oil, shovel, soap, 3 torches, waterskin, whetstone, 1 week's rations.

¹⁰ Alchemist's bag, backpack, flint and steel, bedroll, mirror, belt pouch, 3 pints of oil, rope, 1 week's rations, 5 quarts of water, 10 bottles, and 3 torches.

¹¹ Spellbook, backpack, bedroll, lamp, flint and steel, ink and quill, 3 pints of oil, cloak (light), one book, waterskin, 1 week's rations.

¹² Bedroll, backpack, caltrops, lantern, 3 pints of oil, ale (gallon), flint and steel, a tankard, rope, manacles, waterskin, 1 week's rations.

¹³ Thieves' tools, backpack, mirror, flint and steel, belt pouch, grappling hook, rope, caltrops, sack (small), 2 pints of oil, lantern (bullseye), waterskin, 1 week's rations.

¹⁴ Tent (two person), backpack, rope, bedroll, winter clothing, boots (heavy), flint and steel, shovel (small), cloak, waterskin, 1 week's rations.

¹⁵ This is included with the wilderness pack.

Type	Armour and Shields	Weapons
Wizard	None	Any strength allows.

Alchemists can be equipped as heavy or light infantry.

Sorcerers and summoners can choose to be equipped as light infantry.

Elementalists, witches, warlocks and wizards cannot wear armour if they want to cast spells.

Armour and Weapons

The following tables show the standard armour and weapons found in the Vale. Each section is colour coded for the type of infantry that use it. Remember that only the heavy infantry are **required** to use the designated armour and weapons, Lighter troops and support staff can wear and use what they like.

Type	Colour
Support Staff/Mages	
Light Infantry	
Heavy Infantry	

Armour

Armour	Adds	Min Str	Weight	Cost
Cloak with hood (torso, head)	+1	d4	5	5
Leggings	+1	d4	5	5
Tunic (torso, arms)	+1	d4	5	10
Robe with hooded Cloak (torso, arms, head)	+1	d4	8	10
Leather Tunic or Jacket (torso, arms)	+2	d6	11	20
Leather Leggings (legs)	+3	d6	8	20
Leather Cap (head)	+3	d6	1	10
Scale mail hauberk (torso, arms and legs)	+3	d8	32	200
Pot helm (head)	+3	d8	3	50

Shields

Shield	Parry	Cover	Min Str	Weight	Cost
Small	+1	-	d6	4	5
Medium	+2	-2	d8	8	9
Large ¹⁶	+2	-4	d10	12	20

¹⁶ -1 pace when carrying or wielding it.

Melee Weapons

Melee Weapons	Damage	Min Str	Weight	Cost	Notes
Dagger/Knife	Str+d4	d4	1	2	Can be thrown
Staff	d4	d4	4	-	Parry +1, 2 handed, Reach 1
Axe, Hand	Str+d6	d6	3	6	Can be thrown
Axe, Battle	Str+d8	d8	6	10	-
Spear	Str+d6	d6 or d8	6	2	Reach 1. Parry +1 if used with Two Hands (requires Min Str d8)

Ranged Weapons

Ranged Weapon	Range	Damage	AP	ROF	Min Str	Weight	Cost	Skill
Dagger/Knife	3/6/12	Str+d4	-	1	d4	1	2	Ath
Sling	4/8/16	Str+d4	-	1	d4	1	-	Ath
Axe, Hand	3/6/12	Str+d6	-	1	d6	3	6	Ath
Bow, Composite	12/24/48	Str+d6	1	1	d6	3	100	Sho

Ammunition	Cost	Weight	Notes
Arrows	1/20 arrows	3 lbs/20 arrows	For all types of bows.
Sling stones	1/50 stones	1 lb/20 stones	Polished stones for slings.

Gear Summary

Character Type		Weight	Cost
Heavy infantry	Armour	35	250
	Shield	8	9
	Weapons	15	18
	Total	58	277
Light infantry	Armour	20	50
	Shield	4	4
	Weapons	9	104
	Total	33	158

To the totals listed above add the cost of clothing and a pack. Subtract that total from 500 to determine what other gear you can buy.

For example: Ted is in the shield wall. He decided to take an adventurer's pack.

Heavy infantry gear = 277 GP + 45 GP adventurer's pack + 10 GP for clothing = 332. Subtract that from 500 GP leaves 168 GP to spend.

Setting Rules

- Updated rules (bound & entangled, limited actions (Fantasy Companion p. 75-76)
- New Rules (Desperate attack, Stream template (Fantasy Companion p. 76)
- New Hazard (High Altitude - The inhabitants of the Vale are acclimated to high altitudes so reduce all high altitude penalties by -2. (Fantasy Companion p. 76)
- Setting Rules
 - Conviction (SWADE Core p. 136)
 - Creative Combat (SWADE Core p.137)
 - Downtime (Fantasy Companion p.77)
 - Dynamic Backlash (SWADE Core p. 138)
 - Fast Healing (SWADE Core p. 139)
 - Giant Foes ((Fantasy Companion p.79)
 - Unarmed Hero (SWADE Core p.141)
 - Villainous Conviction (Fantasy Companion p.79)

Last updated November 23, 2024