

# Familiars

## A Basic Fantasy RPG Supplement

Basic Fantasy Role-Playing Game Website: [basicfantasy.org](http://basicfantasy.org)

### Release 1

Copyright © 2008-2013 R. Kevin Smoot, Artwork courtesy of Cory "Shonuff" Gelnett  
All Rights Reserved  
Distributed under the terms of the Open Game License version 1.0a

## FAMILIARS – COMPANIONS FOR CASTERS

This supplement provides rules for incorporating special Familiars, under the Basic Fantasy Role-Playing Game rule system. If you do not already have a copy of the Basic Fantasy RPG rules, please visit the website and download a copy. As always, any supplemental materials or other features are completely optional and may or may not be allowed by the Game Master.

## GETTING YOUR FAMILIAR

### Cast the Spell

The primary way one acquires a familiar is through the use of a spell, simply called **Familiar**. The basic spell is listed below, and can be available for both arcane or divine spell casters. The Game Master is free to alter the spell in certain ways in order to suit his or her preference, differentiation between sub-classes used, or for campaign specific reasons. For instance, a Familiar for a cleric of a particular deity may be limited to a particular type of creature or may have other limitations based upon that cleric's ethos. For the sake of simplicity, the spell description is written primarily for standard magic-users, and one should simply apply logic when the spell is utilized by other types of characters.

The Familiar spell is never freely available to any spell caster. It must be rewarded, specifically placed by the Game Master to be found by a character, or researched independently.

### Familiar

-	Range:	5 feet
level 1 spell	Duration:	special

By the casting of Familiar, a spell caster forms a bond with an animal or creature (or sometimes an item). The caster may attempt to summon an appropriate subject from the nearby region, or he may bond with an appropriate subject already in close proximity. Casting the spell requires special materials including censer and rare incense (at least 100gp per casting). The ritual takes 12 hours of meditation and concentration to build the bond. At the end of the casting period, the caster must make an Ability Check modified by his Charisma bonus (p.141); if successful the bond has been established, but if failed the caster cannot bond with the creature in question ever (even with subsequent castings of the spell).

Typically, normal animals are so bonded with. If a subject creature has not been identified by the caster, the Game Master may, at his discretion, bring forth one of the desired species of regular animals, choose another appropriate animal, or roll randomly. Of summoned animals, only those naturally residing within the immediate area will be called forth. A caster desiring a specific breed or type of animal would need to travel to an appropriate habitat where such are found. In addition, there are special types of creatures that are also appropriate and readily bonded with such as pseudodragons, homunculus, or others. Such special familiars are never simply summoned by the spell, and must be sought out by the caster during game play. However, the creature must be a willing participant in the process, and one generally still requires the casting of this spell to properly build the bond with the creature.

The creature to be bonded with is limited by hit dice appropriate to the caster's level (see table). Most normal animals having less than one HD are generally appropriate for any level caster, but higher level casters may desire more durable companions. When looking at a creature's hit dice, anything more than +3 is counted as 1 die higher, and the Game Master may declare certain special abilities, despite the actual HD of the creature, are treated as higher HD. Special Familiars do not always follow the hit dice limitation and generally have other types of requirements. As the caster's level increases, his familiar gets benefits such as additional



Hit Points (though not counted in the limits listed above), increased Armor Class and Save bonuses. The familiar gains additional hp equivalent to the level of the caster forming the bond, and this quantity increases as the caster acquires additional levels. The familiar attacks according to its own hit dice or as equivalent to the spell caster, whichever is greater. The familiar may have access to one or more spells determined by its master (see the appropriate section below).

Level	Maximum Hit Dice	AC Bonus	Save Bonus	Familiar's Caster Level
1 - 2	1/2 hd	+1	-	na
3 - 5	1 hd	+1	+1	1
6 - 8	2 hd	+2	+1	2
9 - 11	3 hd	+2	+2	3
12 - 14	4 hd	+3	+2	4
15 - 17	5 hd	+3	+3	5
18 - 20	6 hd	+4	+3	6

Note that the **Familiar** spell is available to any spell caster, though they may need to research it for themselves as it does not appear on any class list of spells (very much on purpose). Clerics may acquire such familiars, but they are generally quite limited in their choice to that sort of animal that is favored by their deity, religion, or otherwise associated with their ethos. Likewise, because an animal associated with a particular deity may be larger (more hd) and thus only higher level individuals can acquire such. The Game Master will provide relevant details on such matters. Other optional sub-classes will likewise require the GM to adjudicate.

A spell caster will not typically have more than one such familiar at a time. Breaking the bond of a familiar, generally by death, is very detrimental to the survivor. Specific damages and detriments are covered below.

*The Game Master is free and actively encouraged tailor familiars to his setting and the preferences of the player. Choosing a familiar is a particularly personal choice for most players, often already having something in mind when inquiring about familiars. Simply giving a player a toad when his heart is set upon a ferret or weasel is sure to cause conflict. Work with the player to come up with something that works within the campaign but also satisfies the player.*

### Other Means to acquire a Familiar

While the standard method of getting a familiar is through the use of the above mentioned spell, there are other means and even other types of bonds that a spell caster may desire. For instance, pseudodragons are a type of creature that readily desires to bond with others in a similar manner. Often a spell caster will reinforce this bond with an actual casting of the above **Familiar** spell.

Another type of familiar is that of a constructed or animated sort of creature. Some magic-users concoct through various forms of alchemy and magic a being known as a homunculus. Vile necromancers may have special undead types that they utilize like familiars. Other casters make pacts with beings of the nether-world in order to acquire the services of minor beings from such realms. In a similar fashion, creatures of heavenly goodness bestow benevolent servants to those they favor. Faerie creatures often become akin to familiars to those who share their temperaments.

Still another method does not require an animal at all. Instead the caster bonds with a very personal item, usually specially constructed just for the caster, often with magical embellishments. The nature of such items can vary but the usual such item is a wand, staff, rod, or ring that is always on his or her person or at the very least within easy reach at all times.

In all these mentioned instances, each is a special case with particular rules and requirements and will obviously vary from case to case. The Game Master will have such interwoven into his campaign and will give the appropriate details when called for. Individual monster entries may provide additional details.

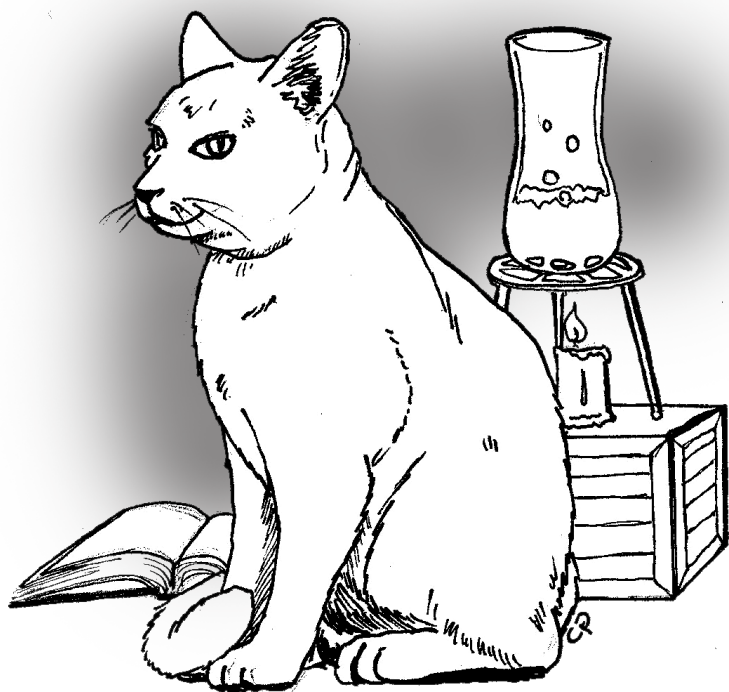


## ANIMAL OR CREATURE FAMILIARS

Both the master and the animal/creature familiar gain benefits from this symbiotic arrangement. They each receive a level of satisfaction, completeness, and sense of well being from their connection with the other.

The spell caster and the familiar share a special bond, having an empathic sort of knowledge of the well being and emotional state of each other. If the spell caster concentrates on the task, he can "see" through the senses of his familiar animal, though the "sight" granted is foggy, indistinct, and tinny, rather like a "tunnel vision effect" even with respect to sound, smell, taste, and touch. The spell caster cannot do anything else during this concentration, and both must be upon the same plane of existence (or dimension, realm, or similar state of being). The familiar itself does not have this "sight" ability in reverse with respect to its master, but otherwise has the basic emotional bond.

For spell casters using Item Familiars, the powers are slightly different than those listed here. Look to the **Item Familiars** section below for such specifics.



## For the Spell Caster

The spell caster who acquires an animal or creature familiar gets a +1 on Surprise checks due to the additional and generally enhanced senses of his familiar. This increased awareness is empathic and conveyed between them so long as the master and familiar are in close proximity of each other.

So long as the familiar is within 10 feet of its master, all spells that are cast upon oneself or personally affect the caster are cast at +1 effective caster level with respect to range, duration, or similar features dependent upon level (this does not grant any other level related factors such as additional spells per level). This includes spells that can target others, but are instead applied to oneself (such as invisibility, cure spells, etc.). Spells that affect areas, or multiple people are not so increased.

The familiar acts as somewhat like a "ring of spell storing". The spells "stored" by the familiar are chosen by the caster during the time when he prepares his own spells. The quantity of spells so be held as if the familiar has 1/3 of the caster's level rounded down. For instance, a 3rd level magic-user's familiar has the spell assortment of a 1st level MU, and when the MU reaches 6th level the familiar would be able to hold spells as a 2nd level MU. When the familiar is in contact the master (spell caster) can call upon the spells as bonus spells (using his own caster level).

## For the Familiar

Familiars gain a great deal from the symbiosis. All such familiars gain substantially in their intelligence and understanding of the world. They generally take on a demeanor that makes them appear as atypical members of their species (unless they act in a "dumbed down" manner specifically to seem unassuming). They may even develop unique markings, colors, or other features that set them apart from the normal members of their species. These subtle changes often mirror distinctive aspects of their master.

As stated in the spell description, the familiar gets a bonus to its Armor Class and Saves according to its master's level (see table above in spell description). The familiar also gets bonus hit points equal to the level of the master. These bonus hit points do not factor into any other functions of hit dice. In addition, the familiar attacks according to its own hit dice or with the same attack bonus base as its master, whichever is better.

While the familiar is in direct contact with its master, it receives the benefit of any spells cast by its master that are personal affecting (as mentioned above). The spell effect is independent at that point and the familiar may subsequently leave its master and move about with the effect intact.

The familiar holds "stored" spells chosen by the master. While in physical contact, these spells are available to the master as bonus spells. Alternatively, the familiar itself may call upon the magics directly, but such spells are cast at the familiar's level of ability (ie. 1/3 that of the Master). Obviously spells cast by the familiar are not bound by exactly the same rules as the master when it comes to 'hands free' and speech; the familiar can produce most spells as if it was akin to an innate ability. If a spell stored by the familiar requires a special ingredient, material component, or special action that cannot be produced by the animal, then the spell can only be held for the master to utilize as mentioned above with the familiar being unable to cast it on their own accord.

## ITEM FAMILIARS

When a spell caster feels better suited to acquire an item to enhance and focus his powers, the idea is much the same, only without the living creature component. The caster uses an item very personal to himself, usually created by or at least especially for himself, often by master craftsmen. The item may be magical in its own right, but nonetheless acquires a bit of magical enhancement, at least while in the hands of its master. One cannot simply find a magical staff and bond with it; the item must be special to the caster in some way. The **Familiar** spell above is still utilized to facilitate the bonding process. Item Familiars are often wands, rods, daggers, and staves (the usual four forms), but may be other such items such as rings, amulets, or other types of talismans. Divine spell casters may so bond with special holy symbols of their order. Staves or Daggers are the most common, as the bonding gives some enhancement to its combative nature.

### Item Familiar Benefits

At the end of the process of bonding, the item will radiate magic while in the hands of its master. The bond does not create new senses or sensations other than the caster is aware of the status of his Item Familiar. If the item can be used as weapon, then the item is treated as a +1 weapon, or if already magical, is increased by +1, but only in the hands of the spell caster with the bond. Likewise, items with magical powers will work with increased effectiveness in the hands of the bonded master, each such inherent power being increased in a manner roughly equivalent to +1 or 1 additional caster level, or something similar, however the Game Master may have creatively decide the nature of such enhancements due to the variability of such magical powers. This bonus for the item (whether magical combat bonus or the enhancement of powers) increases with the spell caster's level. This increase is equivalent to that listed for the animal familiar's AC bonus found in the table for the **Familiar** spell (increasing to +2 at 6<sup>th</sup> level, +3 at 12<sup>th</sup>, and +4 at 18<sup>th</sup>).

So long as the item is within 10 feet of its master, it can be called into his hands moving through the air as if by telekinesis. If somehow the item is restrained or held by another, the strength of the telekinetic force is that of a Strength score equal to the Intelligence score of the spell caster. The Game Master might roll open doors checks, ability checks (p.141), or whatever seems most appropriate to resolve such situations.

While held or manually manipulated, all spells that are cast upon oneself or personally affect the caster are cast at +1 effective caster level with respect to range, duration, or similar features dependent upon level (this does not grant any other level related factors such as additional spells per level). This includes spells that can target others, but are instead applied to oneself (such as invisibility, cure spells, etc.). Spells that affect areas, or multiple people are not so increased.

The familiar item acts as somewhat like a "ring of spell storing". The spells "stored" by the bonded item are chosen by the caster during the time when he prepares his own spells. The quantity of spells so be held as if the item familiar has 1/3 of the caster's level rounded down. For instance, a 3rd level magic-user's familiar-staff has the spell assortment of a 1st level MU, and when the MU reaches 6th level the staff would be able to hold spells as a 2nd level MU. Unlike an animal or creature familiar, the item (being non-sentient) cannot call upon these spells on its own accord. *However, if the Game Master is utilizing rules for intelligent magical items, he may relax this particular aspect and have it work akin to the way animal familiars can call upon the powers.*



## OTHER FAMILIARS

Other sorts of familiars have unique rules and requirements. These are generally detailed within the appropriate Monster Entry or wherever those creatures are found. One adds the features of the **Familiar** spell only if that spell is cast, strengthening the bond between master and familiar. The Game Master may choose to alter one or more aspects of the bond if he feels balance is at stake.

Familiars, especially such special familiars, are meant to be unique additions that are conducive to more interesting role-playing. The rules presented here are not meant to create some universal and unifying mechanic, especially with regards to such special familiars. Special familiars will substantially increase the power of a caster, so the Game Master is urged to exercise caution in such situations.

## BREAKING THE BONDS

The bond with a familiar is effectively permanent and exclusive to one pairing at a time. A caster may not have more than one familiar (of any kind) at any given time. The bond is stronger than that of a mere pet. They are part of each other. One could not get rid of one's familiar any more than considering discarding one of your arms.

Separation of the pair by planar, dimensional, temporal, or similar forms of travel will cause panic and despair feelings. The spell caster is penalized -2 on any Intelligence, Wisdom, or Charisma based ability checks. This can only be negated by the pair being reunited.

Death of the familiar is more catastrophic. The caster will immediately suffer damage equal to the full hit points of the familiar. A character that dies from the damage may be **raised** normally. In addition, the spell caster will lose Intelligence and Wisdom points, depending on the level of the caster (higher level means stronger bond with familiar). For 1<sup>st</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> level the caster loses 1d3 points (rolled separately for Intelligence and Wisdom). All but one point of this ability damage may be healed (1 point per day akin to constitution loss p.51). The last point is permanent loss, though it may be restored via **restoration** spell. For 6<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> level the loss is 1d6 point each; 11<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> use 1d8; and for 16<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> use 1d10 for the ability damage rolls. Any spell caster whose prime requisite ability score drops below class minimum cannot cast or prepare spells until healed sufficiently. Under normal circumstances, a familiar cannot be raised or brought back to life. The spell caster cannot form a new bond with another familiar for 1 year after such trauma.

For the familiar that loses its master, the result is nearly always death, as it suffers in exactly the same manner. The hit points loss is equivalent to the caster's full hit point allotment (and ability score loss if such is measurable or applicable). If the

spell caster is brought back to life, the familiar will remain dead (and generally cannot be raised or restored short of a wish). As above, the spell caster cannot form a new bond with another familiar for 1 year.

Item familiars are much more forgiving. A spell caster wishing to construct or acquire a different (usually more powerful) item as a familiar must destroy the first taking the appropriate ability damage to Intelligence and Wisdom. However, none of the ability points are "permanent" damage and one does not suffer any hit point losses (as the item has no hit points of its own). The spell caster must wait the standard 1 year, often preplanned for a time period when little adventuring is expected.

## FAMILIARS IN BFRPG

Normal animal types listed in the core rules (or Field Guide) are all possible familiars. Often stats for one animal may be utilized for similar animals of the same general type. Regardless, the Game Master will decide upon undocumented creature statistics, using other similar creatures as guidance.

Bear in mind that the familiar concept is not limited to just the traditional witch's cat or wizard's owl. The bonding (assuming high enough level caster) may be with larger creatures, even mounts, or monstrous types, limited by Hit Dice. Certain classes might call their "familiar" by different terms such as Animal Companions, or Special Mount. The Game Master may alter the specific rules here to tailor such alternatives. Larger animals offer certain problems for spell casters to house, move about in civilized areas, and more, so these are often quite rare.

Then, there are special familiars with extraordinary abilities that go beyond even those detailed here. Some of these work alongside these rules well, but for others the GM may need to change certain aspects to accommodate; these are just idea-starters.

Blink Dog, Hell Hounds, Nixie, Pixie, Shadow, Sprite.

The Field Guide of Monsters has several creatures specifically tailored to be familiars:

Brownie, Cu-Sidhe, Flederkatze, Homunculus, Imp, Quasit, Pseudodragon

More coming... Field Guide being under construction, you know!



**SUMMARY**

Abbreviated Summary of effects of having Familiar:

**Animal or Creature Familiar Benefits**

- Empathic Bond, Concentrate for "sight" through Familiar.
- +1 Bonus on Surprise rolls
- +1 Caster Level on Personal Effecting Spells (within 10')
- Bonus Spells as if 1/3 caster level (in contact)
- Familiar gains bonus to HP (MU level), AC, Saves, Attacking ability, and becomes more intelligent.
- Receives effect of beneficial spells cast upon MU (in contact)
- Familiar has ability to independently utilize "stored" bonus spells

**Item Familiar Benefits**

- If weapon magical bonus is increased (see table), other items have power increased in similar fashion (GM determines)
- Call item into hands
- +1 Caster Level on Personal Effecting Spells (held/worn)
- Bonus Spells as if 1/3 caster level (held/worn)



## Open Game License

### INTRODUCTION

**Familiars: A Basic Fantasy Supplement** (hereinafter "the Supplement") is based on the System Reference Document v3.5 ("SRD"), which is Open Game Content. The text of the Open Game License itself is not Open Game Content. Instructions on using the License are provided within the License itself.

**Designation of Open Game Content:** The entire text of the Supplement (except the Open Game License, as noted above) is Open Game Content, released under the Open Game License, Version 1.0a (reproduced below) as described in Section 1(d) of the License. Artwork incorporated in this document is not Open Game Content, and remains the property of the copyright holder.

**Designation of Product Identity:** Product identity is not Open Game Content. The following is designated as product identity pursuant to OGL v1.0a(1)(e) and (7): (A) product and product line names, including Basic Fantasy Role-Playing Game, Basic Fantasy RPG, and BFRPG, as well as the phrase "make mine Basic"; (B) all artwork, logos, symbols, graphic designs, depictions, likenesses, formats, poses, concepts, themes and graphic, photographic and other visual representations, including the "eye" logo, which is the personal mark of Chris Gonnerman for his various products, and which is Copyright © 2002 Chris Gonnerman, and the "Scribbled Dragon," which is Copyright © 2005 Erik Wilson; (C) logos and trademarks, including any trademark or registered trademark clearly identified as product identity by the owner of the product identity, and which specifically excludes the open game content.

More information on the Open Game License can be found at:

<http://www.wizards.com/d20>

### OPEN GAME LICENSE VERSION 1.0A

The following text is the property of Wizards of the Coast, Inc. and is Copyright 2000 Wizards of the Coast, Inc ("Wizards"). All Rights Reserved.

1. Definitions: (a) "Contributors" means the copyright and/or trademark owners who have contributed Open Game Content; (b) "Derivative Material" means copyrighted material including derivative works and translations (including into other computer languages), potation, modification, correction, addition, extension, upgrade, improvement, compilation, abridgment or other form in which an existing work may be recast, transformed or adapted; (c) "Distribute" means to reproduce, license, rent, lease, sell, broadcast, publicly display, transmit or otherwise distribute; (d) "Open Game Content" means the game mechanic and includes the methods, procedures, processes and routines to the extent such content does not embody the Product Identity and is an enhancement over the prior art and any additional content clearly identified as Open Game Content by the Contributor, and means any work covered by this License, including translations and derivative works under copyright law, but specifically excludes Product Identity. (e) "Product Identity" means product and product line names, logos and identifying marks including trade dress; artifacts; creatures characters; stories, storylines, plots, thematic elements, dialogue, incidents, language, artwork, symbols, designs, depictions, likenesses, formats, poses, concepts, themes and graphic, photographic and other visual or audio representations; names and descriptions of characters, spells, enchantments, personalities, teams, personas, likenesses and special abilities; places, locations, environments, creatures, equipment, magical or supernatural abilities or effects, logos, symbols, or graphic designs; and any other trademark or registered trademark clearly identified as Product identity by the owner of the Product Identity, and which specifically excludes the Open Game Content; (f) "Trademark" means the logos, names, mark, sign, motto, designs that are used by a Contributor to identify itself or its products or the associated products contributed to the Open Game License by the Contributor (g) "Use", "Used" or "Using" means to use, Distribute, copy, edit, format, modify, translate and otherwise create Derivative Material of Open Game Content. (h) "You" or "Your" means the licensee in terms of this agreement.

2. The License: This License applies to any Open Game Content that contains a notice indicating that the Open Game Content may only be used under and in terms of this License. You must affix such a notice to any Open Game Content that you Use. No terms may be added to or subtracted from this License except as described by the License itself. No other terms or conditions may be applied to any Open Game Content distributed using this License.

3. Offer and Acceptance: By Using the Open Game Content You indicate Your acceptance of the terms of this License.

4. Grant and Consideration: In consideration for agreeing to use this License, the Contributors grant You a perpetual, worldwide, royalty-free, non-exclusive license with the exact terms of this License to Use, the Open Game Content.

5. Representation of Authority to Contribute: If You are contributing original material as Open Game Content, You represent that Your Contributions are Your original creation and/or You have sufficient rights to grant the rights conveyed by this License.

6. Notice of License Copyright: You must update the COPYRIGHT NOTICE portion of this License to include the exact text of the COPYRIGHT NOTICE of any Open Game Content You are copying, modifying or distributing, and You must add the title, the copyright date, and the copyright holder's name to the COPYRIGHT NOTICE of any original Open Game Content you Distribute.

7. Use of Product Identity: You agree not to Use any Product Identity, including as an indication as to compatibility, except as expressly licensed in another, independent Agreement with the owner of each element of that Product Identity. You agree not to indicate compatibility or co-adaptability with any Trademark or Registered Trademark in conjunction with a work containing Open Game Content except as expressly licensed in another, independent Agreement with the owner of such Trademark or Registered Trademark. The use of any Product Identity in Open Game Content does not constitute a challenge to the ownership of that Product Identity. The owner of any Product Identity used in Open Game Content shall retain all rights, title and interest in and to that Product Identity.

8. Identification: If you distribute Open Game Content You must clearly indicate which portions of the work that you are distributing are Open Game Content.

9. Updating the License: Wizards or its designated Agents may publish updated versions of this License. You may use any authorized version of this License to copy, modify and distribute any Open Game Content originally distributed under any version of this License.

10. Copy of this License: You MUST include a copy of this License with every copy of the Open Game Content You Distribute.

11. Use of Contributor Credits: You may not market or advertise the Open Game Content using the name of any Contributor unless You have written permission from the Contributor to do so.

12. Inability to Comply: If it is impossible for You to comply with any of the terms of this License with respect to some or all of the Open Game Content due to statute, judicial order, or governmental regulation then You may not Use any Open Game Material so affected.

13. Termination: This License will terminate automatically if You fail to comply with all terms herein and fail to cure such breach within 30 days of becoming aware of the breach. All sublicenses shall survive the termination of this License.

14. Reformation: If any provision of this License is held to be unenforceable, such provision shall be reformed only to the extent necessary to make it enforceable.

### 15. COPYRIGHT NOTICE

Open Game License v 1.0 Copyright 2000, Wizards of the Coast, Inc.

System Reference Document Copyright 2000-2003, Wizards of the Coast, Inc.; Authors Jonathan Tweet, Monte Cook, Skip Williams, Rich Baker, Andy Collins, David Noonan, Rich Redman, Bruce R. Cordell, John D. Rateliff, Thomas Reid, James Wyatt, based on original material by E. Gary Gygax and Dave Arneson.

Basic Fantasy Role-Playing Game Copyright © 2006 Chris Gonnerman.

Familiars: A Basic Fantasy Supplement Copyright © 2008-2013 R. Kevin Smoot.

### END OF LICENSE