

Sentient Weapons

Sentient Weapons	Release 3 Copyright © 2006-2017 Chris Gonnerman All Rights Reserved Distributed under the terms of the Open Game License version 1.0a
A Basic Fantasy RPG Supplement	

Basic Fantasy Website: basicfantasy.org

INTRODUCTION

This supplement provides information for Sentient Weapons, a special type of magic item, 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.

SENTIENT WEAPONS

Some magic weapons have an intelligence all their own. Only weapons proper (i.e. not ammunition) will be intelligent, and it is unusual for a sentient weapon to be smaller than a shortsword. These weapons think and feel the same way characters do and should be treated much like NPCs. Sentient weapons have extra abilities and sometimes extraordinary powers and special purposes. In general, less than 1% of eligible magic weapons have intelligence; it is recommended that the GM place each one specially, and not give them out as part of randomly generated treasures.

Sentient weapons (also called “intelligent weapons”) do not have the same sort of sentience as ordinary creatures. For instance, regardless of the stated intelligence score of a sentient weapon, they are not capable of extended thinking or planning, or any sort of design or engineering tasks. Sentient weapons have poor memories, remembering only the most important events of their existence. A very old sentient weapon might remember only its most famous (or infamous) wielders, and only the most significant battles in which it was wielded.

Unlike most magic items, sentient weapons can activate their own powers without waiting for a command word from their owner. A sentient weapon acts when its owner acts in initiative order, but acts of its own accord.

Weapon Affiliation or Purpose

Sentient weapons are created for some specific purpose. Generally, this is manifested as the weapon's *affiliation*. A weapon may be affiliated with a religious association, a specific race, or some other group or order. An affiliated weapon will prefer to be utilized by members of the

affiliated group; further, the weapon will avoid at all costs working against the interests of the affiliated group. So, a weapon affiliated to the Elves of the White Forest might permit a human to use it if no better choice is available, but the weapon would still resist being used *against* the Elves of the White Forest.

*Alternately, a sentient weapon might be created to follow some particular philosophy or mission, at the GM's option. The wielder of such a weapon must behave in support of the weapon's philosophy or mission, or at least not against it, in order to be granted the advantages the weapon possesses.

Some sentient weapons also have a specific purpose,** typically to fight some particular type of foe. Obviously, the affiliation and purpose of the weapon must not conflict. For instance, a weapon might have been created to defend the elves from trolls; thus, the weapon is affiliated with the elves, but fighting trolls is its purpose. The weapon will prefer to act in accordance with its purpose; for example, the aforementioned elf-made weapon created to fight trolls would prefer to be in the hands of an elf warrior fighting trolls. However, in the absence of a troll to fight, the weapon would find fighting orcs or dragons equally acceptable, just as it would likely tolerate being used by a human in the absence of a qualified elf wielder. There is no table or die roll to determine whether or not a sentient weapon has a purpose; this is up to the GM to decide.**

A sentient weapon will naturally prefer some wielders over others, based on its affiliation and/or purpose. A sentient weapon which does not like its wielder may choose to hide its nature, pretending to be a common sort of magic weapon, until it is in the hands of someone it prefers. Alternately, such a weapon may choose to inflict damage directly on the wielder when it is drawn or handled, doing 2d4 points of fire or electrical damage per round so long as it is held. A sentient weapon may even choose to act as a cursed weapon, with a penalty equal to its usual bonus (-2 vs. +2 for example). One final option for a sentient weapon is to attempt to control the unwanted wielder (as explained below).

Intelligence of Weapon

d20	Intelligence	Lesser Powers	Greater Powers
1-5	8	1	-
6-10	9	2	-
11-14	10	3	-
15-17	11	3	1
18-19	12	3	2
20	13	4	3

Weapons with less than 9 Intelligence communicate by means of empathy: the possessor feels urges and sometimes emotions from the weapon that encourage or discourage certain courses of action. The weapon can understand the intent or desire of the wielder (with some limitations). Weapons having 9 or higher Intelligence will be

able to speak.

Languages Spoken By Weapon

Sentient weapons which can speak will know Common (or the racial language of the weapon's creator, if that is different from Common) as well as one additional language per point of Intelligence above 9. Choose appropriate languages, taking into account the weapon's origin, affiliation, and purpose (if any).

Sensory Abilities

A sentient weapon typically has about the same visual and auditory abilities as its creator had; so Human-made weapons cannot see in the dark, but Elven or Dwarven weapons have Darkvision. A sentient weapon may also have powers granting additional sensory abilities.

Sentient Weapon Powers

Each sentient weapon will have a number of lesser and greater powers, as determined on the table above. Lesser powers are primarily detection abilities; when the sword activates one of these powers, it can scan an adjacent area 10' wide by 20' deep each round for up to a turn. A sword can activate only one lesser power at a time, and each such power can be used up to 6 times per day.

Greater powers are, in effect, spells; each sentient weapon which has greater powers will be able to activate each one up to 3 times per day, for at most 1d4+1 turns each time (for those powers which are not instantaneous). Though the sword chooses when to use its powers, once activated they are under the control of the wielder (so, for instance, the wielder controls any illusions created by the Phantasmal Force power). A list of suggested greater powers is provided below, but the GM may add any spells he or she sees fit. Note that offensive spells are not usually granted to a weapon, since the weapon is its own offense.

Lesser Powers

*% Roll	*Power
01-15	Detect Gems and Jewels
16-20	Detect Illusion
21-35	Detect Invisible
36-50	Detect Magic
51-60	Detect Metal
61-70	Detect Secret Doors
71-75	Detect Shifting Walls and Rooms
76-80	Detect Sloping Passages
81-00	Detect Traps

Greater Powers

*% Roll	*Power
01-09	Clairaudience (as the potion)
10-20	Clairvoyance (as the spell)
21-37	ESP (as the spell)
38-45	Flying (as the spell)
46-60	Cure Light Wounds (as the spell)
61-74	Levitation (as the spell)
75-81	Phantasmal Force (as the spell)
82-87	Telepathy (as the helm)
88-91	Teleport (as the spell)
92-00	X-Ray Vision (as the ring)

Sentient Weapon Ego

Ego is a measure of the total power and force of personality that a sentient weapon possesses. To calculate a sentient weapon's ego, add together its Intelligence and combat bonus, plus 1 point for each lesser power and 2 points for each greater power. For weapons having more than one combat bonus, the weapon's ego may actually change when in the presence of creatures that would receive the higher figure. Consider a Longsword +1, +3 vs. Regenerators; in the presence of trolls, the sword's ego rises two points.

Weapons vs. Wielders

A sentient weapon is always true to its affiliation (and purpose, if it has one). If the character who possesses the weapon is not true to that affiliation or purpose, personality conflict (weapon against character) results.

A character's ego is equal to his or her Intelligence and Wisdom added together; this figure is reduced by half the Wisdom score if the character has half or less of his or her hit points remaining.

When a personality conflict occurs, the possessor's ego is compared to the weapons ego; if the weapon has a higher ego score (not merely equal), the character must make a saving throw vs. Spells. Failure of the save means that the weapon takes control of the character. If the save is made, the weapon can force another such check each round, until the roll is failed or the character releases the weapon (including sheathing it). Of course, if the situation which is causing the weapon to seek control passes before the wielder fails a save, the weapon will stop trying to take control.

Control lasts for one day or until a critical situation occurs (such as a major battle, a serious threat to either the weapon or the character, and so on), which forces another personality conflict check to be made. Should a weapon gain control, the character behaves as if charmed, doing the weapon's will. This may include:

- **Removal of associates or items whose goals or personality are distasteful to the item.**
- **Causing the character to give away all other magic items or items of a certain type.**
- **Immediately seeking out and slaying creatures hateful to the weapon.**
- **Causing the character to relinquish the weapon in favor of a more suitable possessor due to personality differences or conduct.**
- **Forcing its possessor into combat.**
- **Forcing its possessor to surrender to an opponent.**
- **Cause the character to drop the weapon.**

Naturally, such actions are unlikely when harmony reigns between the character's and item's affiliations or when their purposes and personalities are well matched. Even so, an item might wish to have a lesser character possess it in order to easily establish and maintain dominance, or a more powerful possessor so as to better accomplish its goals.

All magic items with personalities desire to play an important role in whatever activity is under way, particularly combat. Such items are rivals of each other, even if they have the same affiliation. No sentient weapon wants to share its wielder with others.

Items with personalities are never totally controlled or silenced by the characters who possess them, even though the items may never successfully control their possessors.

Revision #1

Created 2026-08-20 00:44:23 UTC by TheDM

Updated 2026-08-20 00:44:39 UTC by TheDM