

## ALCHEMIST'S LABORATORY: AN ALTERNATE DUNGEON

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The art of alchemy arose among archaic scholars pursuing cures for disease, pain and mortality. Some continued to hunt for medicines, while others turned from the healing arts to seek riches, trying to transform ordinary metals into pure gold. While the alchemists of our world evolved into modern scientists, those within the Pathfinder Roleplaying Game found their original methods more successful. In a world brimming with arcane power, a true alchemist may achieve wonders to rival even great feats of magic. A blend of science and sorcery, alchemy remains a mainstay of roleplaying games, embodying the intersection between reality and fantasy.

Exploring an alchemical laboratory provides adventurers with a glimpse into the minds and arsenals of the great crafters. The alchemist masters the world by learning its fundamental workings through experimentation, concoction and dissection. Over smoking fires in rooms lined with cluttered shelves, they hone their art. Although alchemical laboratories share many features with typical dungeons, designing a realistic yet mystical laboratory presents a unique challenge for the modern GM. The following section uses a combination of mysterious atmosphere and real world chemistry to provide the GM with guidelines for transforming a simple alchemist's workroom into an unforgettable gaming experience.

### DEFINING THE DUNGEON

An alchemist's laboratory serves as a workshop where scholars can refine mundane ingredients into tools or supernatural power. Alchemist laboratories can be found anywhere intelligent creatures call home, whether as part of a larger complex or built as an independent structure. At its heart, a laboratory is a high-risk workspace, designed to maximize efficiency, function and, above all else, safety. Laboratories tend to be sequestered from living spaces in order to reduce the risk of alchemical waste or botched experiments harming people or property. The nature of a laboratory dungeon depends on its state of repair; abandoned laboratories accumulate numerous hazards as unstable concoctions and apparatuses break down, while occupied laboratories are better maintained and more likely to contain recent research notes, newly crafted alchemical products and functional traps.

### DESIGNING THE DUNGEON

When designing an alchemical laboratory as a dungeon, the GM must consider how each room's features contribute to the laboratory's overall function. Laboratories are dynamic structures that require certain components in order to conduct safe and reliable experiments. Dilapidated or inadequate provisions create an unstable environment, increasing the risk of

hazards and changing the nature of encounters within the laboratory. Below are some features the GM should consider when designing an alchemist's laboratories as dungeons.

**Disposal:** All experiments create waste, which must be removed. Ideally a researcher can dump experimental waste into a river, chasm, portal or other reservoir where they can disperse with little risk. Laboratories that lack immediate disposal methods must set aside containers to hold alchemical detritus until it can be safely removed. Laboratories without adequate disposal mechanisms risk mixing unstable waste products, which interfere with normal biology. Creatures interacting with alchemical waste must make a Fortitude save (DC 10 + the party's APL). Failure means the creature cannot heal hit points or ability damage naturally. This condition can be removed with a DC 20 Heal check or a *remove disease* spell.

**Heat Source:** Heat is easily manipulated, making it an appealing and often vital catalyst for alchemical reactions. A fire that burns too hot can easily lead to an explosion, while a fire that is allowed to burn too low may not yield the desired results. Ideally, alchemists have apparatuses capable of limiting temperature fluctuations; almost any heat source can be jury-rigged to function in a laboratory. Broken or poorly regulated heating mechanisms can create severe or extreme heat conditions, or explode when mishandled, functioning like *fire trap*, *fireball* or *incendiary cloud*.

**Maintenance:** Alchemical reactions are sensitive, and even small flaws or trace amounts of contamination can ruin materials. Alchemists must routinely scour their workspace, glassware and other tools, and replace damaged equipment to ensure high quality products. Improperly maintained laboratories increase the risk that alchemical items found or produced in the laboratory fails to function (up to 50% chance of an item having no effect when used), and debris can function as difficult terrain or caltrops.

**Ventilation:** Poisonous fumes are an insidious killer. Gaseous products can quickly fill the surrounding air if a laboratory is not properly ventilated. A chimney is often sufficient, but noxious or volatile substances require artificial airflow to draw fumes away, such as heated air rising to carry away vapours, or vacuums created by pump mechanisms or magical portals. Poor ventilation results in the accumulation of toxic fumes, which deal 1 point of Constitution damage per hour, minute or round spent in the laboratory, depending on the extent of contamination. A DC 10 Fortitude save resists the damage, but longer exposures become more dangerous, increasing the DC by 1 per previous save.

## RUNNING THE DUNGEON

Running an alchemist's laboratory as an adventure site is similar to running a traditional dungeon. Below are some features GMs should bear in mind when using an alchemical laboratory as a dungeon.

**Airflow:** Bellows, shutters, fume hoods and other apparatuses installed in a laboratory allow alchemists to direct gases into or away from certain areas. A DC 15 Disable Device or Knowledge (engineering) check allows creatures to manipulate these mechanisms to relocate or remove airborne hazards. Powerful ventilation devices may create strong or severe wind effects.

**Contaminants:** Poorly cleaned laboratories accumulate all manner of poisonous compounds that can weaken the body and befuddle the mind. Creatures within contaminated areas take a -2 alchemical penalty on Fortitude and Will saves unless they wash away the toxins by making a DC 20 Heal check.

**Corrosive Compounds:** Alchemists often work with materials that rapidly dissolve wood, stone and metal, requiring special containers that remain unharmed by the powerful solvents. Objects exposed to these reagents take 2d6 acid damage every turn, ignoring hardness, until the item is destroyed or the corrosive substance is scraped or washed away. Attended or magical objects can attempt a DC 15 Reflex save to negate the damage. Objects that are immune to acid damage remain unharmed by these reactions.

**Explosives:** Some concoctions are extremely unstable when exposed to an open flame. When ignited or dealt fire damage, these mixtures explode, dealing 1d6 bludgeoning damage and 2d6 fire damage in a 10-ft. radius burst (DC 15 Reflex halves). Clusters of these compounds can create catastrophic chain reactions capable of destroying entire buildings.

**Irritants:** Alchemical reagents can be notoriously pungent, causing itching, nosebleeds, watery eyes and other distractions to confound the senses. Creatures exposed to irritants must make a DC 15 Fortitude save or take a -2 penalty on Perception checks until they return to fresh air. Alchemical irritants also obscure other odours, so creatures with the scent ability can only detect creatures within 5 feet, and the base DC to track by smell becomes 20 rather than 10.

**Mutagens:** Some alchemical materials possess properties that enhance or inhibit effects that alter a creature's physical properties. When a creature exposed to mutagens is targeted by a transmutation spell effect, there is a chance its duration will be decreased by half (1-40), doubled (41-80) or remain unaffected (81-100). The magic consumes the mutagens, which only modifies the first transmutation spell affecting the creature following its exposure. Mutagens have no effect on spells with a duration of instantaneous or permanent, though these spells still remove the mutagens from the creature.

## SACKING THE DUNGEON

Like any adventuring site, an alchemical laboratory has its share of valuable treasures and magical artefacts. Listed below are inspirational ideas for unique, thematic treasures to award PCs adventuring within an alchemical laboratory.

**Alchemical Ingredients:** The most obvious resources found in laboratories are reagents used in alchemy. Using these rare ingredients provides a +2 circumstance bonus on Craft (alchemy) checks, and reduces the time needed to craft any nonmagical alchemical item by one day. Particularly potent reagents can enhance the magical properties of solutions. Potions created with these ingredients increase the duration of their effects by 50%. An alchemical laboratory typically has enough materials to create 1d4 of these extended potions.

**Documents:** Most alchemists keep fastidious records of background research and experimental results in order to reproduce their findings. Valuable to researchers in their own right, these tomes may also provide bonuses on Craft or Knowledge checks, function as magical scrolls or spellbooks or describe ways to augment spells using alchemical items. These formulae allow spellcasters to use items created with Craft (alchemy), such as alchemist's fire or thunderstones, as optional material spell components for related spells, providing bonuses on caster level, save DCs or other benefits based on the GM's discretion.

**Precious Metals:** Many alchemists study metallurgy, probing the mystical properties of rare metals and discovering valuable alloys. Ores, powders and ingots of any metal or gemstone may be found in a laboratory. These precious commodities can be sold or used as raw materials for relevant Craft skills. Experimental metals may also possess new properties, such as increased hardness, more hit points or resistance to certain types of energy damage.

**Research Equipment:** Delicate experiments require masterfully crafted tools, so intact sets of alembics, crucibles, retorts and other apparatuses can fetch a high price among alchemists. Glassware is fragile, so looting it requires extra care. When a PC carrying research equipment takes damage, there is a 5% chance the glass shatters into worthless shards. Carrying the equipment in an extradimensional space removes this risk, unless the extradimensional container is damaged.

