

THE MUSEUM'S MARVELS

HOW TO MAKE YOUR OWN MAGICAL ITEMS

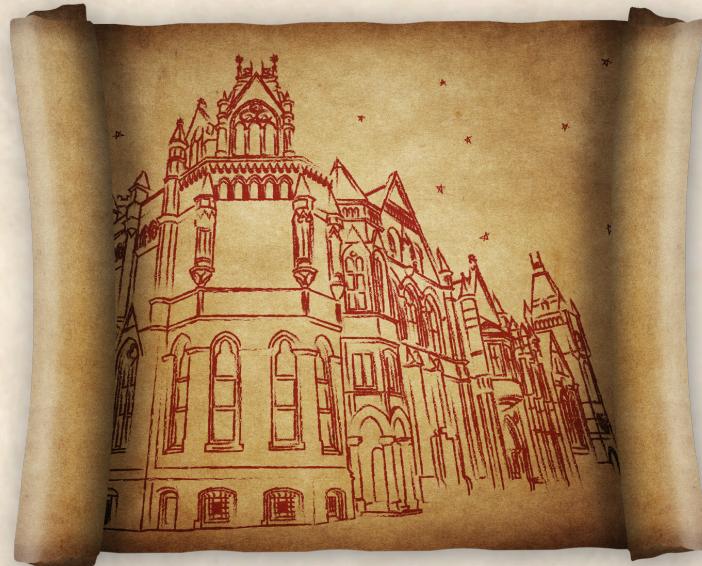
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TOOLKIT

What happens when you mix historical artefacts, collaborative storytelling and a twenty-sided die?

Here at Reading Museum we set out to answer just that! Through a unique Dungeons and Dragons project, we want to explore new ways of engaging with our collections and bringing the museum to life.

In Dungeons & Dragons 5th edition (D&D 5e), magical items are objects that can grant the user various special abilities. These abilities can range from casting specific spells to giving the user modifiers on certain ability rolls. The possibilities are endless!



Our goal with this toolkit is to provide you with a step-by-step guide on how to turn any museum object into a magical item, compatible with D&D 5e.

Alongside this resource we have created six magical item cards, which are inspired by objects from our own collection. You can find these on our website, and are even available for you to print out and use in your own campaigns.

This resource contains;

- A QuickStart guide, for those familiar with magical items in D&D 5e
- A detailed guide for those who may need a little more guidance

We have also annotated two of our own examples, and provided a template for you to design your own magical item cards.

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Cover art is by Rich Lucas and object art is by Del.

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QUICK START GUIDE

Use this QuickStart guide (alongside the template on page 7) to create your own magical item cards. If you get stuck we have created a more detailed guide, alongside some examples, to help you on your way.

STEP 1



Pick a Museum object! (and draw it)

Wonder though your local museum or search their online collections and find an object that inspires you!

STEP 2



Name your Magical item!

There are no limitations on this, it can be purely inspired by your imagination or you can base it off the object itself.

STEP 3



Which Category is it?

There are 9 options.

- Armor
- Staffs
- Potions
- Wands
- Rings
- Weapons
- Rods
- Wondrous
- Scrolls
- Items

STEP 4



- Common
- Uncommon
- Rare
- Very rare
- Legendary
- Artifact

Rarity!

The rarity of a magical item reflects two things:
1) How easy it is to find.
2) The item's power in relation to other magical items.

STEP 5



Does your item require attunement?

Attunement means that the user has to create a 'bond' with the item in order to use its magical abilities.

STEP 6



Description!

This is where you describe both the physical appearance and magical capabilities of your item.

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DETAILED GUIDE



Step 1) Pick a Museum object (and draw it!)

Wander though your local museum or have a gander at their online collections and find an object that inspires you! This could be anything, from an ancient Roman oil lamp to a pair of Victorian glasses.

Step 2) Name

So, now that you've picked your museum object, you'll need to come up with a name for your magical item. There are no limitations on this, it can be purely inspired by your imagination or you can base it off the object itself. You can see some examples below;

- *Key Ring*
- *Ancient Oil Lamp*
- *Turtle Jug*
- *Ulfbehrt's Sword*
- *Durmuik's White Mole*
- *Huntlian's Never-hungering Scroll Case*

Step 3) Category

The next step involves seeing which category best fits your object. In D&D 5e there are nine categories, ranging from armour to weapons and rings. Have a look at the full list below:

• Armour		• Rods		• Wands	
• Potions		• Scrolls		• Weapons	
• Rings		• Staffs		• Wondrous Items	

While most of the classifications are self-explanatory, the wonderous items category encompasses any magical item that does not fall neatly within any of the others.

Step 4) Rarity

The rarity of a magical item reflects two things:

- 1) How easy it is to find
- 2) The item's power in relation to other magical items

Common → Uncommon → Rare → Very Rare → Legendary → Artifact

For example, a common item can be bought in most towns or villages, whereas Legendary items or Artifacts may be one of a kind and hard to find.

Secondly, the rarer an item is the more powerful it is, and it can mean that you have to be at a higher level to use the item.

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Step 5) Attunement (Optional)

You could decide that your item will require 'attunement'. This means that the user will need to create a 'bond' with the item in order to use its magical abilities; however, the user can only attune to three items at a time.

You might also want to specify if a specific class has to attune to your item, e.g. a druid or a ranger.



Step 6) Description

Now we get to the fun part! This is where you can get particularly imaginative by describing both the physical appearance and magical capabilities of your item. The description can be as long or short as you like, though we would recommend writing a paragraph or so. You can also add some background lore about the history of the item.

Many magical items allow the user to cast a specific spell when equipped.

It's always best to put limitations on how often an item's effect can be used (e.g. charges) so that the item is not too overpowered. E.g. the 'Circlet of Blasting' allows the user to use 'Scorching Ray' once per day, with its ability renewing at dawn.

To think about what magic can do in D&D 5e, have a look at the schools of magic listed below:



Abjuration	Prevents or reverses harmful effects
Conjuration	Transports creatures or objects
Divination	Reveals information
Enchantment	Influences minds
Evocation	Channels energy to create effects that are often destructive
Illusion	Deceives the mind or senses
Necromancy	Manipulates life and death
Transmutation	Transforms creatures or objects

You can find a comprehensive list of spells within the System Reference Document. This is available at <https://www.dndbeyond.com/srd>

Alternatively if you want your item to have a simpler effect, it could give the user a modifier/advantage on a ability roll. E.g. the 'Boots of Elvenkind' gives the user advantage on stealth rolls.

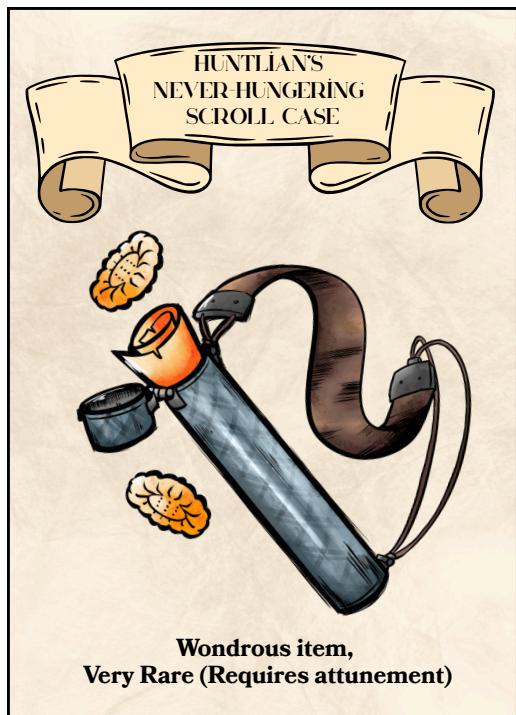
You might also consider making your magical item sentient, meaning they have their own personality. **'A sentient item could be possessed, haunted by the spirit of a previous owner, or self-aware thanks to the magic used to create it.'** They can be helpful allies or absolute nuisances. Similarly, you could make your item cursed. A cursed item may give the user a negative effect when equipped or it might not work as described until the curse is broken.

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EXAMPLE 1 - Huntlian's Never Hungering Scroll Case



Name & Inspiration

This magical item was inspired by an unusual tubular biscuit tin called the '*Travellers Tin*' made by Huntley and Palmers in the 1800s.

Huntley and Palmers, was a famous biscuit factory that used to be based in Reading. As such when it came to naming the item we used a play-on-word with one of the founder's names.

Illustration

As you can see from the photo on the right, the illustration is very similar to the original item. However, it does show that the magical item stores scrolls as well as biscuits.



Category

This object is a wonderous item, as it does not fit into any of the other 8 categories.

Rarity

We categorized this item as **Very Rare**.

It's one of a kind, meaning it's would be hard to find however it's abilities', while useful, are not very powerful.

Attunement

We decided that the user would need to attune to this item in order to use it's magical abilities.

Description

With this item, we didn't describe its appearance, but instead added more lore to the item's background.

In real life Huntley and Palmers refers to the founders of the biscuit company. However, we combined their names to create the wizard Huntlian Palma, maker of this magical item.

Ability wise, this scroll case acts as a useful container for spell scrolls, as well as creating a variety of different biscuits.

This metal tube was once owned by the wizard Huntlian Palma, known for his sweet tooth and culinary skills. To sustain himself though long nights of magical research he created this item. This scroll case can hold a dozen spell scrolls or similar items, any of which can be retrieved as a bonus action. It also creates a sweet biscuit or cookie of a random type every hour; if not consumed with the hour, the biscuit disappears. It is said that Huntlian was defeated by his nemesis, the efreet Jaffar, over a disagreement about what constituted a cake.



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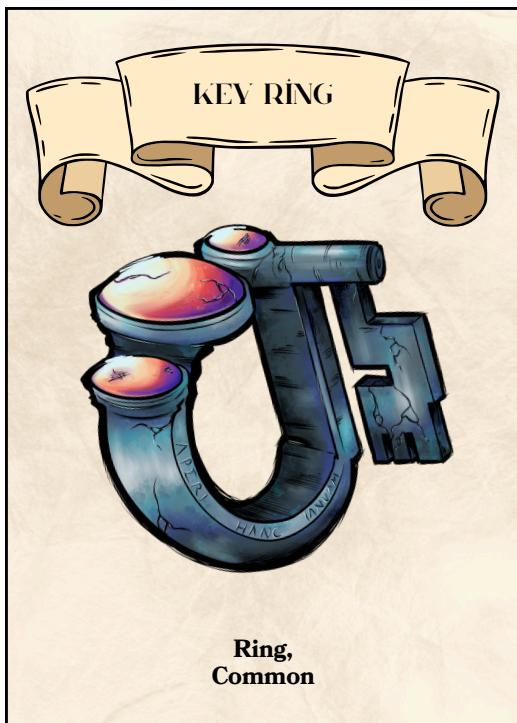


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EXAMPLE 2 - Key Ring



Name & Inspiration

This magical item was inspired by a Roman finger ring found in the Roman town of Calleva Atrebatum. It would have been worn as a piece of jewellery while also being a useable key.

We went very simple with the name, as we just wanted to describe the object.



Illustration

As you are see from the photo on the right, the illustration is very similar to the original item. The only changes made are the stones added to the band of the ring.

Category

This items falls neatly within the Ring category

Rarity

We decided that this item would be a **Common** item, meaning it would be easy to find and could be bought in most towns and villages.

Attunement

As this item is **Common**, we decided it didn't need to be attuned to, and as such the attunement is not needed on the card.

Description

We began with a brief sentence describing what the item looks like before moving onto its capabilities.

This item has both magical and non magical abilities. It can be used as a set of thieves tools (non-magical item), but also has a magical boost when trying to open secured locks. You are not guaranteed success, and its magical power can only be used once.

This oval ring has a small key attached to its left hand side. It can be substituted for a set of *thieves tools* for purposes of attempting to open any locks, but also operates as a *Mystery Key* – when placed into any secured lock the wearer rolls a d20. On a 20 the lock opens but the ring crumbles to dust, its power consumed in the opening.



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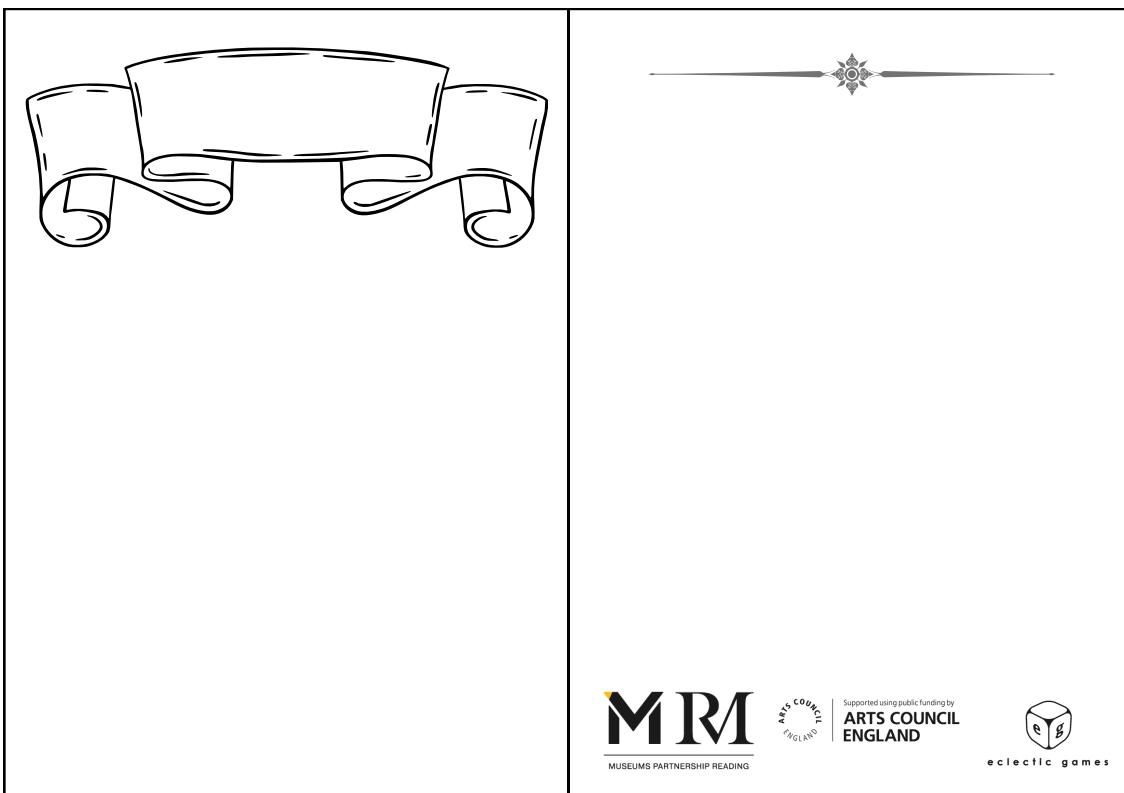
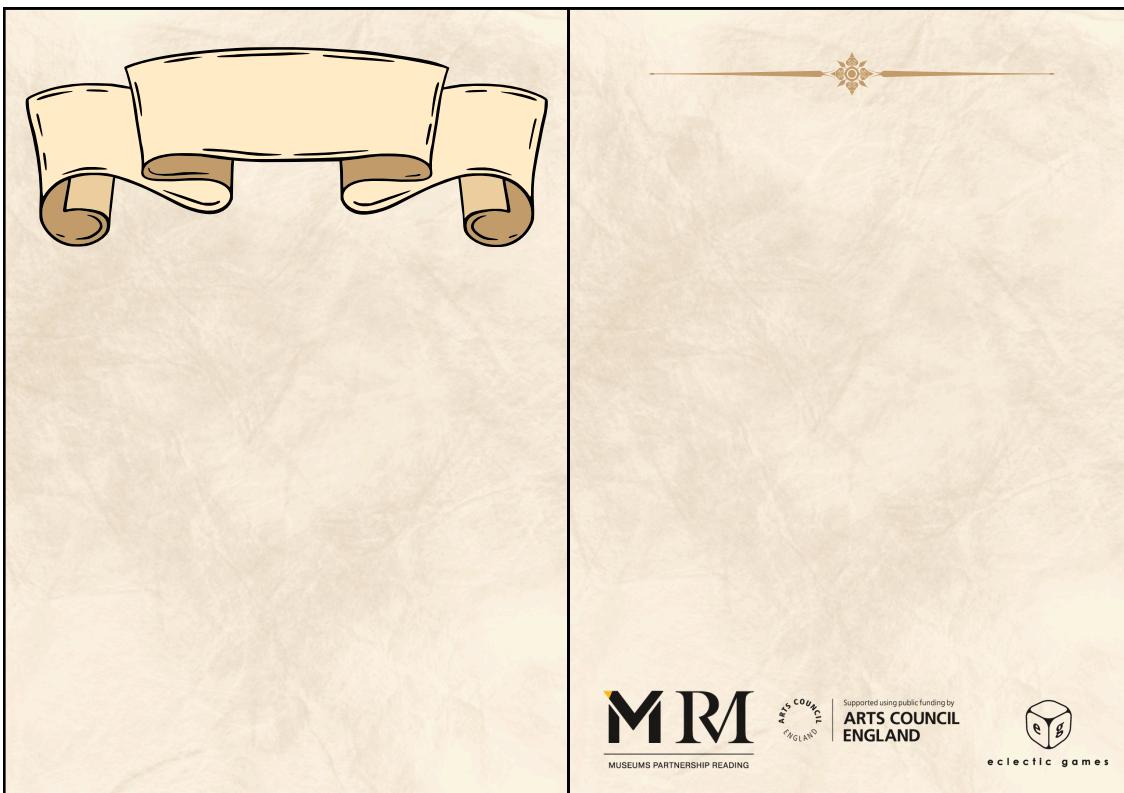


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TEMPLATE - Magical Item Cards



Directions:

Use these templates to create your own magical item cards. Simply print them single-sided on white card or paper, cut them out, fold down the middle and stick together to create double-sided cards.