

PANACHE NONWEAPON PROFICIENCY

Proficiency	Slots	Ability	Modifier
Panache	1	Cha	0

Panache (General)

Even though characters must expend nonweapon proficiency slots to learn panache, it is not a typical nonweapon proficiency. Instead, panache is a special effect native to the Savage Coast that characters can learn how to control. Simply put, the panache special ability allows characters to take advantage of the flamboyant, swashbuckling, adventuresome nature of the Savage Coast to mold situations to their advantage. Characters with panache can do what may seem to be impossible and even accomplish it with style.

Accumulating Panache Points. When a character learns panache, he gains the ability to accumulate Panache Points (PPs). PPs are an accumulation of heroic energy gathered by flamboyant individuals and expended, almost unconsciously, on their behalf. A character can accumulate a number of PPs equal to his current level plus his Charisma reaction modifier. So, a 1st level character with an 18 Charisma can accumulate up to 1 (his level) + 7 (his reaction modifier) = 8 PPs. A 5th level character with a 3 Charisma, however, can only accumulate $5 + (-5) = 0$ PPs.

Of course, obtaining the panache special ability doesn't give characters PPs automatically. Characters must accumulate them by performing heroic and dangerous actions in a flamboyant, stylish manner. A panache-using character does not approach a problem by thinking "How can I accomplish this task?" but, rather, "How can I accomplish this task and come out looking *great*?" If an action is performed in a flamboyant manner, the DM can award PPs to the character even if it fails.

For example, two characters are standing on a balcony, looking at a bar fight below. They see Pirate Pete, Scourge of the Savage Coast, standing in the doorway. Pete pulls out his wheellocks and prepares to fire into the crowd. The characters must do something to prevent this (people who owe them money are in the crowd).

The first character, Miguele de Rocha, is a fighter who does not use panache. Drawing his weapon, he runs down into the crowd, forcing people aside with his great strength and using his Dexterity to side step battles. Because of his natural abilities, he should feasibly be able to cross the room in one round.

The second character, Melisande Sharp, is a swashbuckler who has learned panache. She could draw her rapier and follow her large partner through the crowd, arriving in front of Pirate Pete at the same time, but that would be extremely dull. Instead, she chooses to grab the rope of a nearby chandelier and cut it with her dagger, using the force of the descending weight and her tumbling proficiency to swing over the bar fight, right at Pirate Pete. When she gets there, instead of kicking him or drawing her sword, she kisses him full on his lips, stunning the scoundrel and allowing Miguele (who catches up breathlessly) to attempt to disarm the man.

When Melisande Sharp does this, the DM is encouraged to reward her inventiveness and devil-may-care attitude with a PP award (1–2 PPs is the standard award for a flamboyant act in the middle of an adventure). The DM may choose, instead, to make a note of the accomplishment and award Melisande a bulk award at the end of the adventure. However the DM does it, Melisande should gain some PPs for her exciting display.

Spending Panache Points. PPs can later be spent to increase the chance a character has of accomplishing a task, or even to accomplish a seemingly impossible task with little effort. The simplest translation of this effect in game terms is that if a character spends a PP, he gains a +1 (or +5%) to whatever action he is currently performing. The action could be an attack, a non-weapon proficiency check, or even a one-round improvement of his armor class. Virtually anything can be improved by panache. In addition, the character can spend a number of PPs equal to his level on any one action. So, a fifth-level character could spend 5 PPs to improve his chances on any single action by +5 (or +25%).

The other way to spend PPs leaves the exact effects up to the DM. A character can spend a bulk amount of PPs to accomplish a task (usually one for which few rules exist). The DM then determines whether or not the character is successful, possibly asking for attribute or nonweapon proficiency checks at the same time. The character might spend 1, 5, or 10 PPs, hoping to accomplish a particular action. In order to rate these types of actions, the DM can use the examples in **Table 14.11**.

Table 14.11: BULK PP EXPENDITURES

Spend Accomplish . . .

1 PP	a normal task automatically: a non-weapon proficiency check or impressing a potential employer.
5 PP	a challenging task automatically (or with a few skill rolls): diving from the crow's nest of a ship into the water safely or making a hostile enemy retreat.
10 PP	a seemingly impossible task with a skill check: diving from a castle tower into a moat or taking over the leadership of a band of hostile mercenaries.

While this chart is only a series of benchmarks, it should give DMs something to work with.

If a character spends PPs to accomplish a particular action, that character receives no PPs as a reward for that action. The rationale is simple; if the character spends PPs to do something, he is actually taking less of a risk. This does not affect awards given out for accomplishing adventure goals, however, since they are awarded based on a long series of actions, not one single action.

Characters cannot simply spend Panache Points to get any of the above effects. PPs are not just a game mechanic to cheat or avoid die rolls. The characters must substitute roleplaying and description for these things. **Whenever a character spends even one PP, the player must describe, in detail, how his character is using panache to accomplish his action, or that action will automatically fail.**

For example, Melisande Sharp is in trouble again. Pirate Pete's men have grabbed Miguel from behind. The Scourge of the Savage Coast is not amused by Melisande's little trick; he throws her to the ground and draws his cutlass, preparing to carve her into bait.

Melisande's player states she'll use 5 PPs to decrease her AC from 8 to 3. The DM then asks for a description of her action; the player can't just mark 5 PPs off Melisande's sheet and leave it at that.

The player describes Melisande's action: "Melisande reaches around on the ground and finds a metal tankard, apparently cast off in the fighting. She swings the heavy cup around, blocking Pirate Pete's fatal blow. When Pete retreats in surprise, Melisande throws the mug in his face and flips onto her feet, saying, 'Now, let's dance!'"

Since this is a colorful description sure to impress "the natives," the DM allows the PP expenditure. However, if Pirate Pete rolls well enough to hit AC 3, Melisande will get hit despite her panache. She can't change the outcome of an action; she can only state her *intent*.

Gauche Points. If a character runs out of PPs or has none left, he can accumulate Gauche Points (GPs) in exchange for the PPs he needs. For every GP a character takes, he gets one PP. The maximum number of GPs a character can have is always ten.

GPs tie into the "trouble magnet" aspect of the swashbuckler's lifestyle. GPs can be used by the DM at almost any time to make the character's life more difficult. During an adventure, the DM can tell a character who has accumulated GPs to mark one off and then give the player bad news. Whenever a GP is used, something bad or unexpected happens to the character.

The DM can "spend" GPs two different ways. The easiest way is to cancel out a successful action performed by the character, immediately after it is performed. One GP erased cancels one successful action. The character can try to perform the action again if circumstances allow, but that prior success is negated.

The DM, however, is also constrained by the panache rules. He must describe, in detail, how the action was negated.

For example, when Melisande Sharp spent her 5 PPs to improve her armor class, she had to "buy" 2 PPs with 2 GPs, so she now has two Gauche Points that the DM can use at any time to make her life more difficult.

Currently, Melisande is dodging Pirate Pete's blows. She grabs up a chair and swings it at him, catching him right over the head and doing maximum damage. The DM notices that this would knock Pete unconscious and end the fight, so he tells Melisande to mark off a GP right away and then describes how the action failed.

"As you raise the chair over your head, you notice the fear in Pirate Pete's eyes. Desperately, he raises his arms to protect his head, but too late—you bring the surprisingly light chair down on his skull! Well, you think you do. When you look at your hands, you notice you are holding two broken chair legs. Next time, you should look more closely at the weapon you choose. Meanwhile, Pete growls and hefts his cutlass again. This fight is far from over!"

The one exception to this cancellation of successful actions is simple. If a character spends PPs to succeed at an action or improve his chances, the DM cannot use a GP to cancel that success.

The other way a DM can use GPs is a little more subtle and a little more interesting. The DM can have a character erase one GP to introduce a "story twist," an event or situation that makes the situation more complicated for the character.

For example, Melisande and Pirate Pete are still sparring in the bar as Miguel holds Pete's men at bay. Melisande still has 1 GP left; the DM asks her to mark it off as he describes what happens next.

"You breathe a sigh of relief as you see the city watch burst into the tavern. Everyone pauses in their battle; Pirate Pete lowers his cutlass.

"'You!' the leader of the watch yells at Pete, 'Drop your sword!' You smile. Pete is the only armed person in the bar. Surely, the watch will haul him off.

"However, as the leader approaches Pete, you see the pirate dig into his pocket and come out with a gem the size of your eye. Without hesitating, he flips it to the watch commander. 'Now, I'm sure you fine officers can tell who the *real* culprits are, can't you?' Both Pirate Pete and the watch captain turn to face you."

This method of spending GPs ties into the "trouble magnet" aspect of the swashbuckling lifestyle. This gives the DM a very useful tool in introducing surprises for the panache-using character.