Selling Treasure

Selling gems & jewelry

Selling gems and jewelry always fetches 80% of the object's value unless the DM states otherwise.[1] Characters do not lose any XP that has been awarded for these objects by selling them, since they are already in transportable form before being sold. Of course, if the object is sold prior to XP being awarded, such as to split the value among characters, then the XP is awarded based on the resultant coinage, which will be in total 20% less XP than a single character would have gotten had they kept the object.

This means there is a bit of strategy in choosing whether to sell or keep these items. On one hand, more XP and GP. On the other hand, it has to all go to a single character.

Selling art objects

Extra effort or reaction rolls may be required to find a buyer for certain items.

Selling spellbooks

When looted, spellbooks have a treasure value of 100/200 (xp/gp) per spell level contained therein.[2]

Selling magic items with varying doses, quantities, and power

See Magic Item for how to handle all these cases.

Magic items and identification

Whether or not to focus session time on magic item identification will be a decision that must be made by the DM when the DM is devising their campaign and recruiting players. A table that likes to spend hours experimenting with magic items to figure out their plusses or other effects will be enjoyable to some players and unenjoyable to others. There are also players who enjoy it but, given the choice, would prefer to use session time on adventure.

Some decision must be made, since there is the question of GP value of magic items, and how that GP value is affected by how much the PCs know about the item. Of course, the difficulty in selling these items once value is determined will also vary between campaigns. And whatever time is spent will increase dramatically as characters advance in levels and acquire larger amounts of magic per expedition.

If the DM wishes for the campaign to not spend extensive session time attempting to identify each item, the following rules extension is offered, which we have used at our table for a long time.

Rules extension

This section is a rules extension[Ex] and is not part of the official game rules.

If a magic item has been identified,[3] the DM may inform the players how much XP it is worth if kept, and how much gold and XP if sold. If the item has not been 100% positively identified, the players must choose to keep or sell.

If they choose to keep an unidentified item, one character must take ownership of the item. XP is only awarded when the properties of the magic item have been positively identified. In the case of magic items with multiple properties, partial XP can be awarded. The DM must track the identification status of magic items.[4]

If they choose to sell an unidentified item, the characters will receive the full GP value of the item, even if they didn't know any of its properties. However, they cannot change their mind about selling at this point! Once the DM tells the players the value, the item is completely gone. There is absolutely no renegotiating, stealing-back of the item, or otherwise re-obtaining the item. This is the risk players take when selling an unidentified item. In return, players don't aren't made to feel that they are missing out on potentially tens of thousands of gold if they don't spend 2 hours of session item tinkering with the item.[5]

[1]

PHB 35

[2]

Based on Dragon #62, minus one zero from the insane XP value (typo?). The values in UA are ridiculous.

[3]

Such as when sipping a potion, or via magic identification, for example.
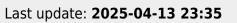
[4]

DM Note: It's helpful to assign an "ID" number to each magic item the players keep. For instance, if the players keep a potion you know to be a *philter of stammering & stuttering*, make a note that the potion is, say, ID 15 (or whatever count you're on). Tell the player the potion is ID 15 and have them write it down. This way, when a character goes to drink the potion, they can tell you that they are using potion ID 15, and not "uhhhh I think I got it in that one cave 8 months ago?" With the ID system, you will know exactly what the item is.

[5]

Further explanation: This is a game mechanic that prevents item appraisal/identification not in the spirit of the game. The alternative we considered is making item identification an important part of follow-up to an expedition, with NPCs possibly giving much less GP than the item is worth because the PCs fail to identify the item or part of its abilities. Not to mention a lot of game time, chat time, and/or downtime might need to be spent. Since most of us would rather slay dragons and plunder treasure than narratively poke at a weird magic cube for 2 hours, or spend a session finding a buyer for a magic item, this is the system we agreed on. With it, identification methods are still valuable, but it's the players' choice whether they want to engage with that process for a particular item or if they just want to sell the item on the "open market" with the "no takebacks" rule.

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