

Mallyate

by Bret Boyd

New Special Material: Mallyate

Is your character tired of never having the right tool for the right job? Maybe he's stuck with a rapier against a gibbering moulder or wearing a *cold resistance* armor against a red dragon. Fear not! Mallyate is here to give a PC what he needs when he needs it for every combat situation. Read on to discover the origins and powers of this strange new extraplanar material.

Physical Appearance

In its natural state, mallyate is found in the shape of a rough hewn cylinder and appears to be little more than gray clay with streaks of midnight blue. The size of the material is random (consult the table below) and determines the armor/weapon that the wielder can create (discussed later).

Roll d6	Size	Length	Width	Weight
1-2	Small	1 ft.	1 in.	2 lb.
3-5	Medium	4 ft.	2 in.	6 lb.
6	Large	8 ft.	4 in.	10 lb.

What Can It Do?

On its own, mallyate is worthless except as an awkward club (damage is 1d6-1). But once it is attuned to its wielder (who must have an Intelligence score of 3 or higher), its power becomes apparent. At the end of the first 24 hours of possession (referred to as "attunement"), the bearer realizes that he can call upon the mallyate to shape itself into any type of armor or

weapon the bearer is familiar with. In this case, "familiarity" means that the wielder must have previously seen the desired item. He need not even be proficient in its use (although this still incurs the normal penalties). Here's where the size of the mallyate matters. The item it morphs into must be of the same designated size. To clarify, consult the following specifications.

Armor Types per Mallyate Size

Small: Any light armor, buckler, or light shields.

Medium: Any medium armor or heavy shields.

Large: Any heavy armor or tower shield.

Weapon Types per Mallyate Size

Small: Any light melee, dart, sling, bolas, hand crossbow, or shuriken.

Medium: Any one-handed melee, light crossbow (normal or repeating), javelin, or shortbow (normal or composite).

Heavy: Any two-handed melee, heavy crossbow (normal or repeating), longbow (normal or composite), or net.

Requires the use of the Dungeons & Dragons® Player's Handbook, published by Wizards of the Coast, Inc. This product utilizes updated material from the v3.5 revision.



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No matter its shape, a mallyate item is always considered masterwork (dimensions and weight change to match the shaped weapon or armor). Mallyate has a consistency closest to steel (hardness 10, 25 hp/inch of thickness). If it is formed into a projectile weapon like a crossbow, the wielder must provide the ammunition (although some sages believe that an advanced mallyate type exists which provides energy-based ammunition). When it is shaped, mallyate makes a faint squishing noise and appears as though unseen hands are forming it with lightning-fast speed.

When Mallyate Breaks

As a kind of “metal,” mallyate is susceptible to rusting and sundering. In addition, there are those magically inclined crafters who wish to melt a mallyate item down and use it as a component in other items to see what might happen. Any condition, however, which shatters, melts, or otherwise breaks a mallyate item, causes it to immediately evaporate in a sizzle and puff of gray ash. Unbeknownst to the wielder, the mallyate actually reforms on the Astral Plane where it originated, safe and whole once again.

A wielder can change the mallyate’s simple form (simple being weapon-to-weapon or armor-to-armor) as a move-equivalent action once per day for every character level he possesses (or every hit die if a monster). If, however, it is changed from a weapon to armor (or vice versa), the process requires one full round and counts as two shapings, being inherently more complicated. When the daily limit is reached, the final form is maintained until the next day begins, at which point the wielder can reshape the mallyate as desired. That said, the same wielder can opt to leave a mallyate item in the same form indefinitely.

Example: A 2nd-level fighter discovers a medium mallyate deposit. He carries the strange material with him, planning to sell it at the next town. But, after 24 hours have passed, he and the mallyate become attuned. The fighter reexamines the material and, much to his surprise, it

shapes itself into his favored weapon—a battleaxe. Quite pleased with this, the fighter decides to keep the strange, but sturdy, weapon. Not long afterward, the fighter is attacked by a group of skeletons. Knowing that a bludgeoning weapon would be more effective against these foes, his mallyate battleaxe suddenly morphs into a flail. After making short work of the undead, their orc cleric creator flees from the nearby bushes. The fighter grins in anticipation and, while pursuing, his flail morphs back into the shape of his favored battleaxe. He hopes the gods are finished throwing creatures at him for the time being since he can not shape his mallyate weapon again until the next day.

If a wielder loses possession of his attuned mallyate (i.e. it is more than 5-feet away) for more than 10 minutes, it reverts back to its original unattuned form. When given to (or taken by) another creature, the same thing happens. However, if the original wielder recovers the mallyate within the 10 minutes, it is as if the item never left his possession. This is apparently the amount of time the intelligence within mallyate can recall its previous wielder. Otherwise, the mallyate must be attuned for 24 hours as if brand new to the possessor

Hidden Talents

Mallyate is highly valued for its versatility but, unless the wielder knows what to look for, he may never discover its real power—the ability to produce magical qualities! To access the magic of mallyate, a creature must either have heard of this capability previously or perform one of the following actions:

- Cast *identify* on the mallyate
- Succeed a Sense Motive check (DC 25) and learn of the ability from the mallyate’s consciousness.
- Succeed a Spellcraft check (DC 25) and learn of the ability by examination of the mallyate.

Once the wielder is aware that his mallyate item can replicate magical qualities, he can call them forth as he would shape the item. The maximum enhancement bonus a wielder can elicit is equal

to his character level (or hit dice) divided by three. Every time an item is changed/improved in this way counts against the number of times a mallyate item can be shaped per day. Additionally, shaping magical qualities is slightly more difficult than shaping overall form. Switching from one (or a set of) magical enhancement(s) to another requires a standard action (as opposed to the move-equivalent action to change simple form).

One important distinction between mallyate magical weapons and armor and normal magical weapons and armor is that mallyate versions do not require an enhancement bonus of +1 to be in place before improving into other properties. A character can wield an *arrow catching mallyate shield* without it needing to be a +1 *arrow catching shield*.

The second distinction is that, when opposing other creatures, the magic of a mallyate may not function. Since it was not constructed with time honored arcane construction methods, a mallyate's magical properties have a chance of failing against the innate power of an opponent. Whether in the shape of armor or weapon, the wielder sets a target number by rolling a level check (d20 + character level). [GM Note: Ideally, the target number is rolled every round the mallyate is in use. If this proves too much of a hassle, just roll it at the beginning of the combat or even at the beginning of each day if that is easier.] This target number is opposed by the level/hit die check of the opponent each time the mallyate's magical enhancements come into play. If the wielder's check is the higher, the item functions as it should. If the opponent's check is higher, the mallyate's magic does not work against it in that particular instant (although the item still functions as a nonmagical version of its current form).

Weapon Example: A 16th-level rogue starts the day with *spell resistance (19) mallyate leather armor* (this +5 property is equivalent to one-third the rogue's level). Later in the day, she needed to shape the armor into a +4 *bane (aberrations) mallyate rapier* (requiring 3 shapings in total—2 shapes to morph from armor to weapon and one shape to alter the magical properties). When the phasm she was expecting finds her, she success-

fully strikes first with her rapier. The rogue's level check totals 27 while the phasm's level check totals 30. The mallyate's magic did not function, so the rogue can only roll for damage as a normal rapier.

Armor Example: A 7th-level fighter starts the day with a +2 *mallyate longsword* (this +2 property is equivalent to one-third the fighter's level). Later in the day, he finds himself under attack by orc archers. Taking cover behind a rock, the fighter starts to shape his +2 *mallyate longsword* into an *arrow deflection mallyate heavy steel shield* (requiring 3 shapings in total—2 shapes to morph from weapon to armor and one shape to alter the magical properties). Unsheathing his ordinary hand axe, the fighter moves toward the nearest archer while finishing the shaping process (one round to shape from weapon to armor and a standard action to change magical qualities). On his way, two orcs fire again at him. They must first roll their level checks (totaling 6 and 9 respectively). The first is a clean miss anyway but the other scores a hit. Before rolling damage for the orc's arrow, we must determine whether or not the *arrow deflection* enhancement functions by rolling the fighter's level check. His roll totals 20 and, since the second orc's roll only totaled 9, the attack proceeds normally; the fighter rolling his Reflex save as per the rules for this shield enhancement type.

Continuous Usage

If a mallyate item continuously remains shaped with magical properties, the mysterious force within it will burn itself out within one month. To ensure this does not occur, the wielder must leave the item in a nonmagical shape or unshaped altogether for a continuous 24 hours. First-time wielders receive quite a shock when their magical mallyate reverts to its original unshaped form. The only way to "recharge" a depleted mallyate is to return it to the Astral Plane for one month. Few wielders, however, have the patience to stay with the material while on this plane; preferring to leave it go or determined to find another fresh mallyate deposit.

There are circumstances when a magic item must make a saving throw. Normally, these saves are determined by using an item's caster level. But since mallyate does not have its own caster level, saving throws instead use the level/hit dice of the last attuned creature. If the last attuned creature is unknown, simply roll a d20 to determine wielder level.

What About Cost?

Mallyate items are truly priceless. As long as it can be shaped, this material is the perfect item for any given situation. Since a mallyate item is balanced, in game terms, for each wielder, formulating a price isn't a necessity. The GM should feel comfortable introducing this special material at any level of play. For purposes of determining PC equipment wealth, if a mallyate is discovered before 3rd-level, give the item a base masterwork cost of 300 gp. At higher levels, mallyate value is the average of the best magical weapon and armor enhancements it can be shaped into. For example, a 9th-level PC would count his mallyate as a 13,500 gp item (18,000 gp for a +3 weapon plus 9,000 gp for a +3 armor divided by two).

Origin Theories

There are few facts concerning the origins of mallyate. The first is that the material begins as bits of matter floating around on the Astral Plane. These are of various sizes and shapes and are, on their own, unremarkable objects. However, these bits of matter occasionally get funneled through vortices in the Plane of Shadow and are deposited onto the Material Plane. Their trip through the Plane of Shadow somehow transforms these mere "bits of matter" into something quite unique. Mallyate can arrive on the Material Plane within normal stone or simply deposited onto open ground. The former is discovered accidentally while mining while the latter is stumbled upon by creatures passing by.

If a random deposit was the only method by which mallyate originated, such deposits would be few and far between. High-level spells or powerful supernatural abilities relating to darkness and shadow seem to draw astral bits like a

magnet, pulling them through the Plane of Shadow and onto the Material Plane. Less powerful spells and abilities can have the same result but the chances are not as good. In game terms, whenever a shadow-related spell or ability is used, there is a 10% chance per spell level (or approximate level for abilities) that a bit of mallyate appears somewhere within a 1d4 mile radius.

Those are the facts. Most of the remaining questions surround the mallyate's innate intelligence. The best answer sages can come up with concerning the intelligence's purpose is that it is a go-between, or translator, for material and wielder. It allows the attunement process to exist in the first place; making a wielder's thought patterns compatible with the mallyate's transformational capability. But where did the intelligence come from? As far as your campaign goes, there is no right answer. The only constant is that the intelligence cannot be directly spoken to as it is little more than a dull consciousness. However, if the GM decides to build a mallyate mythos into the campaign, that can change. Below are a few examples of where mallyate intelligence might originate.

- Previously unknown entities native to the Astral Plane who become absorbed into mallyate on contact. A campaign could center on finding and releasing one of these harmless creatures.
- Souls are trapped within pieces of mallyate by an evil entity as part of an elaborate scheme. When the time is right, these souls cause mallyate to fuse to their wielder's exterior and take control of their minds!
- Exiled prisoners from another plane or dimension, stripped of personality, and set adrift on the Astral Plane inside mallyate.
- Botched planar traveling magics cause the caster's (or traveler's) essence to become lost in the Astral Plane. The traveler's body collapses but his soul is diverted into a piece of mallyate.
- Somewhere in the Astral Plane's endless silvery skies is hidden the last of a race of dragons once thought extinct. Every few decades, the dragon lays a cluster of eggs that, due to the mother's ancient state, cannot hatch. The unborn souls of the dragons survive as a dull imprint of an intelligence that will never realize life.

- The forms of long-dead gods break apart after dying on the Astral Plane. The pieces from the bodies scatter across the plane, imbued with an echo of the deity's once-considerable consciousness and power.

Behind the Scenes: Why Only Armor and Weapons?

For an in-game reason, one could argue that it's simply the nature of all creatures to be combative and adversarial and the mallyate responds to this basic nature by forming only armor and weapons. As for an out of game explanation, these are the easiest items to work with the concept of shapechanging items. If you're a GM who wants to allow mundane mallyate equipment, there isn't anything wrong with that. Perhaps a PC wants to shape his small mallyate into a crowbar. This author says, "Why not?" On the other hand, if a PC wants to shape his medium mallyate into a *staff of fire*, that could prove problematic as more rules crop up than this pdf addresses. To shape these more complicated items, a GM might rule that the PC must succeed a Use Magic Device check (as if he had it as a class skill) (DC 20 + item's caster level) to shape the magic item. Even if successful, the magical properties of the item may still not function against other creatures as per the opposed level check rule for normal mallyate magical qualities.

In the same vein, a PC might want to shape his mallyate weapon into a silver or adamantite one. To do so requires knowledge that the weapon has magical potential (see the "Hidden Talents" section above). Shaping into a different material altogether requires the same standard action as changing magical enhancement bonuses does. When used against other creatures, the same opposed level check rules apply as well.

Adventure Hooks

There are several ways to introduce this adaptable material into a campaign. Here are a few examples.

- Discovery: While the PCs are on the road, underground, or even in a dank urban basement, the way mallyate enters the Material Plane allows it to be found virtually anywhere.
- Treasure: A great many monsters kill creatures and take their possessions back to the lair. When the PCs eventually kill these monsters, those possessions become their own. It is standard fare in a campaign to introduce new items, like mallyate, in this fashion. More intelligent monsters may actually be wielding the mallyate when the PCs encounter them.
- Quest: After a self-styled "shadow mage" is defeated not far from the PCs current location, a sage contacts them for a job. The party is hired to infiltrate the shadow mage's now defunct lair and search for a mallyate deposit. The sage knows of the material's shadow related appearances and wants to study the material in detail.
- Reputation: A high-level bard makes an appearance at the same tavern the PCs are visiting. The half-elf's weapon is as spontaneous as his songs, for as the bard sings of various warriors, his weapon changes shape to match the subjects! After the show, the bard offers anyone knowledge of where to find more of mallyate for the right price.
- Inheritance: Whether the PCs have a base of operations or are on the road, a courier catches up with them. The man bears a chest belonging to one of the PCs recently deceased relatives. Family heirlooms inside now belong to the PC. Clothing and jewelry fill out the bulk of the chest, but at the bottom is a peculiar steel-like mass...

New Spell

Instead of randomly coming upon a deposit of mallyate, a PC can search actively for it with the aid of this new spell.

Detect Mallyate

Divination

Level: Brd 1, Clr 1, Drd 1, Sor/Wiz 1

Components: V, S

Casting Time: 1 standard action

Range: Long (400 ft. + 40 ft./level)

Area: Cone-shaped emanation

Duration: Concentration, up to 10 min./level (D)

Saving Throw: None

Spell Resistance: No

You can detect deposits of mallyate in a cone emanating out from you in whatever direction you face. The amount of information revealed depends on how long you search a particular area or focus on a specific kind of animal or plant.

1st Round: Presence or absence of mallyate in the area.

2nd Round: Number of individual pieces of the mallyate in the area, and the size of the largest specimen.

3rd Round: The power (see below) and location of each individual present. If a piece of mallyate is outside your line of sight, then you discern its direction but not its exact location.

Power: For purposes of this spell, the categories of power are dependant on the previous attuned wielder. If a piece of mallyate is fresh from the Astral Plane (never having a wielder), its power is considered moderate.

Faint: Last attuned wielder was 5th level or lower.

Moderate: Last attuned wielder was 6th to 11th level.

Strong: Last attuned wielder was 12th to 20th level.

The spell can penetrate barriers, but 1 foot of stone, 1 inch of common metal, a thin sheet of lead, or 3 feet of wood or dirt blocks it.

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