The World

I'm going to use a custom, yet fairly typical D&D world. The era is roughly dark ages to early middle ages, with the appropriate technology level of the time (no firearms, printing presses or robots).

Elves, dwarves, gnomes and halflings are semi-mythical and distrusted/fear, but are to be found hidden well away from the human world. There aren't any goblins or orcs, but knolls, lizardmen, trolls and ogres are common problems. Creatures tend towards the more traditional folklore versions; elves aren't anime dolls with purple eyes, trolls aren't regenerating chunks of phlegm.

There are several human kingdoms, most of which only last a generation or two. The lands to the south are fairly civilized, the north less so.

There are two modes of faith. The first is a dogmatic church similar to early Christianity but more openly concerned with promoting order and civilization rather than saving souls. The second is a myriad of heathen deities and beast cults. Clerics and paladins are typical of the first while druids and rangers tend toward the second.

House Rules

With a few (glaring) modifications, we'll be using the 3.5 edition D&D rules. The Player's Handbook is all anyone really needs, but I'm amenable to using things from supplemental books.

The campaign will likely start in a fairly rural and uncivilized area, though characters can come from anywhere.

I'm not a rules lawyer, so if something makes sense, we'll go with it, otherwise we can ignore it.

Races

The D&D races are mostly just stat modifiers, so we can adapt them to whatever demihuman you want to play. I recommend humans, elves or part-elves, vitterfolk (see the Wikipedia entry on trolls), or some variant thereof. Dwarves and gnomes are pretty much the same thing (short guys, good with tools).

Character Classes

If you want to play a spellcaster, read the section below.

No Monks, unless you can convince me otherwise.

Paladins can be any lawful alignment. Fallen paladins can be any chaotic alignment. In my mind, the key to playing a paladin is to be very dogmatic and strict about church law, not necessarily being a pinnacle of moral hygiene.

Be wary of playing a multiclassed character at the beginning, since the rules get somewhat complex.

Be wary of play a Bard, since the class tends to be weak unless the player is exceedingly creative (think multiclassed Fighter/Rogue/Wizard).

No prestige classes until level 10, then only a single prestige class per character.
**Miscellany**

The Knowledge (Local) skill is useful for collecting gossip and scraps of trivia about an area. You can use this skill in any location provided you have spent some time (hours/days/weeks) there. It's like a specialized form of Bardic Knowledge.

Despite their names, the Hide, Move Silently, Spot and Listen skills will be used as follows: Spot (active) is used to counter Hide (passive); Move Silently (active) is used to counter Listen (passive).

Healing spells and potions (Cure Light Wounds, etc.) convert lethal damage to non-lethal damage (see page 146 of the Player's Handbook). Non-lethal damage cannot be healed magically.

**Spellcasters**

These spellcasting rules attempt to fix two problems with standard D&D magic:

1) Spellcasting is the only action that does not require an active D20 roll, which is stupid.
2) "Giggle! I didn't memorize 'Knock' today, so let's go back to town so I can sleep for eight hours!"

The intended result is to avoid spellcasters feeling like magic batteries with legs, yet keep them from being overpowered. Thus, according to the rules below, magic should always be an option but not necessarily a quick and convenient one.

**General**

There is no distinction between arcane and divine spells. Which spellcasting class you choose is simply a matter of style (i.e. you could take the Wizard class and play as a priest).

There are no predefined spell schools, spheres or domains. Pick one or more themes and role-play accordingly.

Material components with a specific cost are required. Trivial material components (those with no specific cost) should be handled by appropriate role-playing ("My character carries 50 lb. of junk with him at all times" or "My character must pray for at least 1 hour at daybreak or he has anxiety attacks"). A lack of trivial material components results in a circumstance penalty to the spellcasting roll.

Detect Magic is a supernatural ability of all spellcasters, used with listen, spot and search where appropriate.

The core spells are mostly fair game. Exceptions include: no Read magic or Detect magic; no Teleport or Plane Shift (replace with portals or the Gate spell); no explicit stat boosters (replace with drugs or illusions); no alignment targeting spells; no Identify or Analyze Dwemer (replace with skill checks).

Spell resistance only applies to the target of the spell, not the target of the spell's effect. A good rule of thumb: if a spell description doesn't specify a target, chances are spell resistance doesn't apply.

I encourage spell research and item creation (especially scrolls and potions).

**Spellcasting Rolls**

The spellcasting roll is:

1d20 + base casting bonus + ability modifier + circumstance modifier

The target number is:
10 + target's spell resistance

Base Casting Bonus:
Cleric/Druid/Sorcerer/Wizard = Character Level
Bard = Character Level * 3/4, round up (see Bard attack bonus)
Ranger/Paladin = Character Level * 1/2, round up (see Wizard/Sorcerer attack bonus)

The standard spell resistance values are reduced by 10 (to match AC).

The spellcasting roll replaces all caster level checks.

The Spell Penetration feat adds a +2 bonus to spellcasting checks

Wearing armour causes a circumstance penalty of 1 per 5% arcane spell failure.

If the situation allows it, you can take 10/20 on a spellcasting roll.

A critical failure on a spellcasting roll results in something bad, including but hardly limited to spell burn (below).

**Channelling**

Druids/Rangers/Sorcerers

Channelling deals with casting a spell by drawing power from spirits or other planes. These spells require 1 spell point per level of the spell to cast.

Channelling (Feat)
Prerequisites: Druid, Ranger or Sorcerer
The character can cast spells by channelling. As a standard action, gain 1d6 spell points to a maximum equal to the character's constitution score. Each spell point gained beyond the character's maximum results in 1d6 points of spell burn (below). A failed concentration check while channelling or casting causes 1 point of spell burn for each unused spell point. Any standard action beyond channelling or casting causes all unused spell points to be lost.

Fast Channelling (Feat)
Prerequisites: Channelling, Caster Level 5th
The character can channel as a move-equivalent action.

The Combat Casting feat applies to all concentration checks made while channelling.

**Rituals**

Bards/Clerics/Paladins/Wizards

A ritual involves casting a spell by prayer, meditation, pretentious diagrams and incantations, or interpretative dance. Spells cast by ritual have substantially extended casting times.

Ritual Spells (Feat)
Prerequisites: Bard, Cleric, Paladin or Wizard
The character can cast spells using rituals. The casting time for a ritual is the normal casting time of the spell plus 5 minutes per level of the spell. Once per day the caster can memorize a number of spells equal to his spellcasting ability modifier, provided he has sufficient access to any appropriate resources (spellbook, silence, security blanket). The casting time for memorized spells is the normal casting time of the spell plus 1 round per level of the spell.
Specialist wizards gain the following benefits related to spells of their chosen speciality: an extra memorized spell; a +2 circumstance bonus on spellcasting rolls; a +2 bonus on Spellcraft rolls.

**Spell Burn**

Spell burn as a result of a failed spellcasting roll or over-channelling results in 1 point of non-lethal damage per point of spell burn.