

Rounding Out the Rules on Rounds

I have always managed to slog my way through the rules on combat rounds in Advanced Dungeons and Dragons, but have always felt that the system was needlessly complex. Some time ago I acquired a document that broke down every element of the combat round, complete with references to the official source material. This comprehensive breakdown of the actions in a combat round totaled 26 pages (You can find it on the Dragonsfoot website - it is mind-boggling!)

Something, in my opinion, had to be done. Could a far simpler approach be achieved? I like the idea of one player rolling initiative for the party and the DM rolling for the monsters every round. That seemed to accommodate for the ebb and flow of battle and the fact that the players and monsters alike would be fighting as a cohesive group. I also liked the idea that dexterity could give you a slight edge over your compatriots. These concepts I have preserved. Weapon speeds also are utilized.

OK, so let's try and create a simpler combat round, which will still consist of 10 segments. First, the players roll initiative on a d6. The die roll indicates the segment on which the players will be acting. Thus, if a two is rolled, they perform their first actions starting on segment 2. Then the DM rolls initiative, with the monsters starting their actions on the segment indicated by the die roll (let's say 3, for example).

This simple approach resolves who wins initiative. The delay is relevant because it indicates that their may be some hesitation as the players observe their foes and try to out-manuever them, are temporarily immobilized by fear, are off balance, recovering from a swing, etc. All combatants may subtract their Dexterity Reaction Adjustment from the initiative roll, but the result can never be less than 1. The result applies to their character only. Each combatant now has a starting segment.

Let's use an example. A Cleric and Orc encounter each other and are 10' apart. The Cleric has a +1 Dexterity Reaction Adjustment, while the Orc does not. The first round of combat starts and the Cleric rolls a 4 on his initiative roll. The Orc also rolls a 4, but the Cleric applies his Reaction Adjustment and attacks ahead of the Orc.

The Cleric closes the distance (1 segment) and swings with his mace. The mace attack happens on the same segment as the Orc's first action (4th). The Orc also attacks with his short sword. After calculating damage, the Cleric adds his weapon speed factor (7) to the current segment (4th), and gets 11, so he is done with activity this round as he recovers from his swing and readies his next attack. The 11 result means that the Cleric takes until the first segment of the next round to recover and ready his weapon, and may act on the 2nd segment of the next round unless his next initiative roll is 4 or higher.

The Orc does the same, adding the speed factor for the short sword (3) to the current segment (4th), getting a 7. The Orc has time to take any action that can be completed within the round except another attack with the short sword.

This may seem complex, but actually carries out smoothly in practice. I ran a party of four adventurers thru a dungeon using this system and combat was very smooth and was resolved quickly. One thing that does help is for every player to have a copy of the sheet on the next page and keep track of their actions by marking their place with a penny or die. Hope you find this helpful.

Actions in a Melee Round

Description	#Segments	Comments
Administer a Potion	5	Help an unconscious creature consume a potion
Apply oil	1	Apply in 1 segment, affects in d4+1 segments
Aid another	Varies	Same as action of creature you are aiding
Basic Attack	Varies	Add weapon speed factor after first attack
Bull rush	Varies	1 segment per 10' moved, push target 1 square
Cast a Spell	Varies	Cast a memorized spell
Charge	Varies	Your max speed divided by 10 equals distance per segment. No Dex bonus is added to your defense.
Coup de grace	2+	2+ weapon speed factor
Crawl	Varies	Normal speed divided by 20 equals distance per segment
Delay action	Varies	Delay your action for 1 to 10 segments
Draw or sheath a weapon	2	You can draw or sheath a weapon
Drink a potion	1	Drink in 1 segment, affects in d4+1 segments
Drop held item	None	Drop item
Drop prone	1	Drop down so that you are lying on the ground
Equip or stow a shield	4	Use a shield or put it away
End a grab	None	Let go of an enemy
Escape	3	Escape a grab
Grab	2	Grab an enemy
Load a light crossbow	6	Load a light crossbow so it is ready to fire
Load a heavy crossbow	12	Load a heavy crossbow so it is ready to fire
Open or close a door	1	Open or close a door or container that isn't locked or stuck
Pick up an item	1	Pick up an item in your space or within reach
Read Scroll	1+level	Spend (1+level of spell) segments to activate a scroll
Ready an action	Varies	Ready an action to perform when a specified trigger occurs
Retrieve or stow an item	2	Retrieve or stow an item on your person
Run	Varies	Your max speed divided by 10 equals distance per segment
Stand up	1	Stand up from prone
Talk	1+	Depends on how long-winded you are
Total defense	10	+2 to defense, spend entire round defending yourself
Use magic device	3*	Utter command word and activate a magic device
Walk	Varies	Normal speed divided by 10 equals distance per segment

* A total of 2 magical devices may be activated per round.

Both parties roll initiative, the lower roll wins, starting their actions on the segment indicated by the die (2nd segment on a roll of 2, etc.), while the losing party starts their actions on the segment indicated by their die. All combatants can add their Dexterity Reaction Adjustment to the initiative roll, but may never start their actions before the first segment of each round.

Actions that carry into the next round: occur as many segments into the round as necessary. Thus a spell started on the 7th segment and taking 5 segments to cast will take effect on the 2nd segment of the following round. If the spell-caster's initiative roll was 1, 2, or 3, his/her next action starts in the 3rd segment, otherwise their next action starts on the segment indicated by the next initiative roll.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----