

AGE 12+

DUNGEONS & DRAGONS

ESSENTIALS™



DUNGEON MASTER'S KIT™

EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO RUN THE WORLD'S GREATEST ROLEPLAYING GAME

James Wyatt ♦ Richard Baker

AGE
12+

DUNGEONS & DRAGONS[®]

ESSENTIALS[™]



DUNGEON MASTER'S BOOK

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DUNGEON MASTER'S BOOK



ROLEPLAYING GAME CORE RULES

James Wyatt





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PLAYING THE GAME

The DUNGEONS & DRAGONS Roleplaying Game created a new game category and started an industry.

A roleplaying game is a storytelling game that has elements of the games of make-believe that many of us played as children. It's also similar to many computer games in which you take on the role of a character and pursue grand adventures. However, the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS roleplaying game provides form and structure, unlike childhood make-believe, and offers robust gameplay and endless possibilities that outstrip what any computer game can offer.

Your friends will create characters that team up to explore a world and battle the monsters that live there. While the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS game uses dice and miniatures, the action takes place in your imagination. There, you have the freedom to create anything you can imagine, with an unlimited special effects budget and the technology to make anything happen.

What makes the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS game unique is the Dungeon Master, or DM. As the DM, you will take on the role of lead storyteller and game referee. You'll create adventures for the characters and narrate the action for the players. Because of you, the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS game is infinitely flexible—you can react to any situation, any twist or turn suggested by the players, to make a DUNGEONS & DRAGONS adventure vibrant, exciting, and unexpected.

This is the game that invented the roleplaying game and started an industry.

The adventure is the heart of the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS game. It's like a fantasy movie or novel, except the characters that your friends create are the stars of the story. As DM, you set the scene, but no one knows what's going to happen until the characters do something—and then anything can happen! Their adventurers might explore a dark dungeon, a ruined city, a lost temple deep in a jungle, or a lava-filled cavern beneath a mysterious mountain. They'll solve puzzles, talk with other characters, battle all kinds of fantastic monsters, and discover fabulous magic items and treasure. And you're the architect behind it all.

The DUNGEONS & DRAGONS game is a cooperative experience. Even though you play the roles of the antagonists in the adventures, you aren't playing against the other players' characters. You don't want them to fail any more than the other players do. The players all cooperate to achieve success for their characters. Your goal is to make success taste its sweetest by presenting challenges that are just hard enough that the other players have to work to overcome them, but not so hard that they leave all the characters dead.

There's no winning and losing in the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS game. The DM and the players participate together in an exciting story of bold adventurers confronting deadly perils. The game has no real end; when your group finishes one story or quest, you can start another one. Many people who play the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS game keep their games going for months or years, meeting with their friends every week to pick up the story where they left off.

THE GAMING GROUP

The heart of a gaming group is the players, who roleplay their characters in adventures set forth by the Dungeon Master. Every player contributes to the fun of the game and helps bring the fantasy world to life.

Players

DUNGEONS & DRAGONS players fill two distinct roles in a DUNGEONS & DRAGONS game: as the player characters—also called adventurers—and as the Dungeon Master. These roles aren't mutually exclusive, and a player can roleplay an adventurer today and run an adventure for the other players tomorrow. Although everyone who plays the game is technically a player, we usually refer to players as those who run the player characters.

The rules of the game (and published adventures, including the ones in this box) generally assume that you're playing in a group of six people: the DM and five other players. Playing with four or six other players is easy with minor adjustments. Groups that are smaller or larger require you to alter some of the rules in this book to account for the difference.

With only two or three characters in an adventuring party, it's harder to get through combat encounters even if the encounter is scaled down for this smaller group. With more than six characters, the group gets unwieldy and tends to split into subgroups. If your group gets too large, you might want to split into two groups that play at different times.

The Dungeon Master

One player has a special role in a DUNGEONS & DRAGONS game. As Dungeon Master, you control the pace of the story and referee the action along the way. You can't play a DUNGEONS & DRAGONS game without a DM.

What Does the DM Do? The Dungeon Master has many hats to wear in the course of a game session. The DM is the rules moderator, the narrator, a player of many different characters, and the primary creator of the game's world, the campaign, and the adventure.

Who Should Be the DM? Who should be the Dungeon Master for your gaming group? Whoever wants to be! The person who has the most drive to pull a group together and start up a game often ends up being the DM by default, but that doesn't have to be the case.

Dungeon Masters Can Partner, Trade Off, or Change: The role of Dungeon Master doesn't have to be a singular, ongoing, campaign-long appointment. Many successful gaming groups switch DMs from time to time. Either they take turns running campaigns, switching DM duty every few months, or they take turns running adventures and switch every few weeks.

DUNGEONS & DRAGONS ESSENTIALS

This box contains everything you need to get started as a Dungeon Master except a place to play, dice, paper and pencils, and players! Here's a quick look at the contents of the box as well as other resources that can help you run an ongoing campaign.

Rulebooks: This rulebook contains all the rules you need to play the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS game as Dungeon Master. If you've never played the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS game before, though, you should start with the *DUNGEONS & DRAGONS Fantasy Roleplaying Game*, a streamlined introduction to how to play.

The *Rules Compendium*[™] is a handy rules reference, and the *Monster Vault*[™] offers hundreds of monsters you can use to populate your own adventures. Your players will use *Heroes of the Fallen Lands*[™] and *Heroes of the Forgotten Kingdoms*[™] to make their characters and reference the rules of the game.

Adventure Books: The two Adventure Books in the box contain adventures you can use to continue a DUNGEONS & DRAGONS campaign right where you left off after the adventure in the *DUNGEONS & DRAGONS Fantasy Roleplaying Game*.

What's In the Game Box

- ◆ This rulebook
- ◆ Adventure books
- ◆ Poster maps
- ◆ Tokens
- ◆ DM Screen

What Else You Need to Play

- ◆ A place to play
- ◆ Dice
- ◆ Paper and pencils

Useful Additions

- ◆ D&D[®] Miniatures
- ◆ D&D[®] Dungeon Tiles
- ◆ Character sheets
- ◆ D&D Insider[™]

Battle Grid: A battle grid is very important for running combat encounters.

This box includes two poster maps you can use to run the encounters in the two Adventure Books. You can buy *Dungeon Tiles* to expand your encounter-building options. Start with *Dungeon Tiles Master Set: The Dungeon*, which provides the tiles you'll need to make basic dungeon layouts.

You can also use a vinyl wet-erase mat with a printed grid, a gridded whiteboard, a cutting mat, or large sheets of gridded paper as a battle grid. Whatever you use, the grid should be marked in 1-inch squares.

Tokens and Miniatures: You need something to place on the battle grid to mark the position of each character and creature in an encounter. This box includes tokens you can use to represent the player characters and all the monsters that appear in the Adventure Books. The *Monster Vault*[™] includes tokens for all the monsters described in its pages. If you want to add a third dimension to your game, *D&D*[®] *Miniatures* are ideal. These preprinted plastic figures are three-dimensional representations of the creatures involved in the battle.

Dungeon Master's Screen: This accessory puts a lot of important information in one place—right in front of you—and also provides you with a way to keep players from seeing the dice rolls you make and the notes you refer to during play.

A Place to Play: The bare minimum of space you need to play the *DUNGEONS & DRAGONS* game is room for everyone in your group to sit. Most likely, you also want a table for everyone to sit around. A table holds your battle grid and tokens, gives you a place to roll dice and write on character sheets, and holds



WILLIAM O'CONNOR

piles of books and papers. You can pull chairs around a dining table or sit in recliners and easy chairs around a coffee table within reach. It's possible to run a game without a table for the battle grid, but combat runs more easily if everyone can see where everything is.

Dice: The DUNGEONS & DRAGONS game uses polyhedral dice with different numbers of sides. You can play with just one of each kind, but in the long run you'll find that it's helpful to have at least three of each kind, and for each player to have a set of dice.

In these rules, the different dice are referred to by the letter "d" followed by the number of sides: d4, d6, d8, d10, d12, and d20. When you need to roll dice, the rules tell you how many dice to roll, what size they are, and what modifiers to add. For example, "3d8 + 5" means you roll three eight-sided dice and add 5 to the total.

Paper and Pencils: Everyone should have easy access to a pencil and paper.

During every round of combat, you need to keep track of hit points, attack penalties and defense bonuses, use of powers, spent action points, the consequences of conditions, and other information. You and your players need to take notes about what has happened in the adventure, and players need to make note of experience points (XP) and treasure their characters acquire. Of course, you can also do a lot of this note-taking digitally, using a computer or smart phone.

Character Sheets: All the players need some way to record important information about their characters. You can use plain paper, but a proper character sheet is more helpful. Some players put their powers on cards instead of their character sheets to make it easier to keep track of which ones they've used. A digital character sheet on a laptop computer or smart phone can also be a great tool for tracking character information and powers.

D&D Insider: Finally, you can enhance your game with a *D&D Insider* (D&DI) membership, an online supplement to the pen-and-paper game. D&DI gives you a ready source of adventures, new rules options to try out, and an array of online tools to make your game go more smoothly. Visit www.dungeonsanddragons.com for more information.

HOW DO YOU PLAY?

Fundamentally, the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS game consists of a group of characters (controlled by the players) embarking on an adventure that you (the Dungeon Master) present to them. Each character brings particular capabilities to the adventure, in the form of class features, racial traits, and powers. Every character is different and has unique strengths and weaknesses, so the best party of adventurers is one where the characters complement each other and cover the weaknesses of their companions. The adventurers must cooperate to successfully complete the adventure.

Encounters

Encounters are the action scenes in an adventure, various kinds of challenges that the adventurers must face and overcome. Encounters include both combat encounters and noncombat encounters.

- ◆ **Combat encounters** are battles against nefarious foes. In a combat encounter, adventurers and monsters take turns attacking until one side or the other is defeated.
- ◆ **Noncombat encounters** include deadly traps, difficult puzzles, and other obstacles to overcome. Sometimes the adventurers overcome noncombat encounters by using their skills or with clever uses of magic, and sometimes the players have to puzzle them out with nothing but their wits. Noncombat encounters also include social interactions, such as attempts to persuade, bargain with, or obtain information from a nonplayer character (NPC) that you control.

Adventurers have an array of tools at their disposal to help them overcome the challenges in encounters, including attack powers—like a wizard’s *fireball* spell or a fighter’s *power strike*—that deal damage and other effects to enemies in combat. Characters also have utility powers, skills, and other features that can be useful in both combat and noncombat encounters.

Exploration

Between encounters, the player characters explore the world—or whatever limited segment of the world your adventure presents them with. The players make decisions about which way their characters travel and what they try to do next. Exploration is the give-and-take of the players telling you what they want their characters to do, and you telling the players what happens when their characters do it.

For example, let’s say the adventurers have just climbed down into a dark chasm. You tell the other players that their characters see three tunnels leading from the chasm floor into the gloom. The players decide which tunnel their

characters venture into first, and they tell you which way their characters are heading. That's exploration. The players might have their characters try almost anything else: finding a place to hide and set an ambush in case monsters come by, shouting "Hello, any monsters here?" as loud as they can, or searching the chasm floor carefully in case there's anything interesting lying amid the boulders and moss. That's all exploration, too.

Decisions the characters make as they explore eventually lead to encounters. For example, one tunnel might lead into a cave full of goblins –if the characters decide to go that way, they're heading into a combat encounter. Another tunnel might lead to a door sealed by a magic lock that they have to break through—a noncombat encounter.

While exploring a dungeon or other adventure location, the adventurers might try to do any of the following actions:

- ◆ Move down a hallway, follow a passage, cross a room
- ◆ Listen by a door to determine if they hear anything on the other side
- ◆ Try a door to see if it's locked, break down a locked door
- ◆ Search a room for treasure
- ◆ Pull levers, push statues or furnishings around
- ◆ Pick the lock of a treasure chest, jury-rig a trap

It's your job to decide whether or not something the adventurers try actually works. Some actions automatically succeed (characters can move around without trouble, usually), some require one or more die rolls, called checks (breaking down a locked door, for example), and some simply can't succeed. Player characters are capable of any deeds a strong, smart, agile, and well-armed human action hero can pull off. They can't punch their way through a door of 3-inch-thick iron plate with their bare hands, for example—not unless they have powerful magic to help them out!

Chapter 3: Running the Game gives you the information you need to determine whether the characters can succeed at the tasks they attempt. See "Using Checks," page 101, in particular.

Taking Turns

In exploration, players don't usually need to take turns. You might prompt the players by asking "What do you do?" The players answer, and then you tells them what happens. The players might break in with questions, offer suggestions to other players, or tell you a new action any time they like. But they should try to be considerate of the other players—all the players at the table want their characters to take actions, too.

In combat encounters, it works differently: The player characters and the monsters all take turns in a fixed rotation, called the initiative order. See Chapter 4: Combat Encounters, for details on how to run combat.

Example of Play Here's a typical DUNGEONS & DRAGONS game session. The scene is the entrance to the Toadwallow Caverns, one of the adventure sites that appears in the adventures included in this box (see page 9 in *Part 1: The Iron Circle*). The players in this session are:

Paul, the Dungeon Master;
Matt, whose character is the dwarf wizard Dien;
David, playing Caliban, a halfling rogue;
Sarah, whose character is a human fighter named Jarren.

Paul (DM): "Water gushes from a cave mouth set into the face of a vine-covered hill, forming a 10-foot-high waterfall that bleeds into a stream. You have found the entrance to the Toadwallow Caverns! The ground near the base of the hill is spongy, and clouds of insects harangue you."

David (Caliban): "Can I climb up quietly and peer in the cave mouth?"

Paul (DM): "Sure. Let's start with an Athletics check for the climb." *The adventure specifies an Athletics DC of 12 for the climb.*

David (rolls an Athletics check for Caliban): "Ew, that's not great. A . . . 14?"

Paul (DM): "That's good enough to climb the cliff, but can you do it quietly? Make me a Stealth check as well." *Again, the adventure points out that the sentries aren't very alert; all Caliban has to do is beat their passive Perception of 12. The adventure suggests that this could be a group Stealth check, but since Caliban is climbing alone, he'll roll his check separately.*

David (rolls a Stealth check for Caliban): "A natural 20! That's a total of 29!"

Paul (DM): "All right, you reach the mouth of the cave, and you don't think you alerted anyone to your presence. What are the rest of you doing?"

Sarah (Jarren): "I'm ready to start climbing if there's trouble, which there's bound to be."

Matt (Dien): "I'm standing back where I have a clear view of Caliban and the cave mouth, so I can cast a spell at anything that attacks him."

Paul (DM): "All right. The cave mouth opens into a dank chamber. Caliban, you see water pouring through a hole in the nearby wall, forming a shallow stream that plunges over the ledge behind you. A stagnant pool of water fills a corner to your right, and a thick patch of multicolored fungus grows atop a pile of offal in the middle of the cave. Two froglike humanoid creatures crouch in the shadows behind the fungi, apparently keeping watch. They wear poorly fitting armor made from leather and carry spears."

David (Caliban): "Those would be the bullywugs the druid sent us to kill."

Sarah (Jarren): "Or some of them, at least."

David (Caliban): “There’s only two of them?”

Paul (DM): “That’s all you can see from there.”

David (Caliban): “OK. I’ll signal the others to start climbing.”

Matt (Dien): “What, you’re not going to rush in and get yourself killed?”

David (Caliban): “Not this time.”

Paul (DM): “So are Jarren and Dien going to scale the cliff as well?”

Sarah (Kristryd): “Sure.” *She rolls an Athletics check.* “I got a 24.”

Paul (DM): “You easily scale up the cliff side. Are you trying to be quiet?”

Sarah (Jarren): “Well, I can try.” *She rolls a Stealth check and frowns.* “My Stealth is -1, so that’s a 10.”

Paul (DM): “Uh-oh. You’re about halfway up when your foot slips and sends a shower of dirt and pebbles down. Caliban, you see the bullywugs react to the sound. They clutch their spears and stare intently at the entrance.”

David (Caliban): “Do they see me?”

Paul (DM): “Not with your 29 Stealth check from before. You’re well hidden.”

David (Caliban): “And they’re not raising an alarm?”

Paul (DM): “Not yet.”

Sarah (Jarren): “Can I get to the top without them seeing me?”

Paul (DM): “Yes, you reach a ledge beside the cave mouth. Dien, what are you doing?”

Matt (Dien): “I think I’d better get up there, too.”

Paul (DM): “Give me an Athletics check.”

Matt (Dien): “Ugh . . . a 3.”

Paul (DM): “Ooh, not good. You start climbing, but slide loudly down the cliff before you get very far. Now the bullywugs know they’ve heard something, and they start croaking an alarm. It’s time to roll initiative!”

Everyone rolls initiative for their characters, and Paul rolls for the bullywugs—the ones the adventurers have seen and the ones lurking out of sight—and for the stirges hidden in the ceiling. Combat begins with the highest initiative roll, but Dien’s going to have to spend a turn or more climbing up the cliff before he can join in.

What happens next? Can Dien, Caliban, and Jarren defeat the bullywugs? That depends on how the players play their characters, and how lucky they are with their dice!

THE MOST IMPORTANT RULE

How do you know if a sword swing hurts the dragon or just bounces off its iron-hard scales? How do you know if the ogre believes an outrageous bluff or if a character can swim across a raging river? The DUNGEONS & DRAGONS game relies on random checks to determine success or failure in these kinds of situations.

The idea behind a check is simple:

1. Roll a twenty-sided die (d20). The higher the result, the better.
2. Add any relevant modifiers.
3. Compare the result to a target number. If the result equals or exceeds the target number, the check is a success; otherwise, it's a failure.

That simple rule governs all DUNGEONS & DRAGONS gameplay. Attack rolls are one important kind of check, where the target number for the check is one of a target's defenses (AC, Fortitude, Reflex, or Will). The modifiers to an attack roll include the attacker's bonuses to attack rolls as well as situational modifiers, such as a +2 bonus for having combat advantage or a -2 penalty if the target has partial cover. Attacks are described in more detail in Chapter 4 (page 132).

Players use the information in player books such as *Heroes of the Fallen Lands* and *Heroes of the Forgotten Kingdoms* to determine the attack modifiers for their powers. The Dungeon Master most often uses the numbers for monsters from sources such as the *Monster Vault*.

Skill checks are the other most common kind of check, where the target number for the check—called its Difficulty Class or DC—is determined by the DM. Sometimes a published encounter tells you what the DC should be. If an adventure doesn't tell you, decide whether you think the check should be easy, hard, or somewhere in between, and then use one of the DCs from the table on page 107. For more information on skill checks, see Chapter 3 (page 101).

What happens when a character makes a successful check? If the character was making an attack using a power, the power specifies the effects of a successful attack. These effects usually include some amount of damage, but they might also include conditions such as blinding or stunning the power's target, pushing the target back, or knocking it prone. Chapter 3 includes more information on understanding powers, both adventurer powers and monster powers.

A successful skill check usually means simply that the character accomplishes what he or she set out to do, but the results can be more subtle than that. If a character attempts a Perception check while pressing her ear against a door, hoping to hear signs of what might lurk on the other side of the door, it's up to you to describe the sounds she hears if she makes a successful check against whatever DC you set. If a character makes an Athletics check in an attempt to jump over a chasm, however, a successful check just means that he cleared the chasm and landed safely on the other side.

The Other Key Rule

Every class, race, feat, power, and monster in the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS game lets you break the rules in some way. These can be very minor ways: Most characters don't know how to use longbows, but every elf does. These exceptions can also appear in very significant ways: A swing with a sword normally does a few points of damage, but a high-level fighter can fell multiple monsters in a single blow. All these game elements are little ways of breaking the rules—and most of the books published for the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS game are full of these game elements.

Once you understand how checks work, the other most important rule for you to understand is how all these exceptions interact with the general rules of the game. Remember this:

Specific Beats General If a specific rule contradicts a general rule, the specific rule wins. For example, a general rule states that you can't use a daily power when you charge. But if you have a daily power that says you can use it when you charge, the power's specific rule wins. It doesn't mean that you can use any daily power when you charge, just that one.

Always Round Down Unless otherwise noted, if you wind up with a fraction as the result of a calculation, round down even if the fraction is $1/2$ or larger. For instance, this rule comes into play whenever you calculate one-half of a creature's level: If that value is odd, you always round down to the next lower whole number.



TABLE RULES

While setting up a DUNGEONS & DRAGONS game, every gaming group needs to set some table rules—rules that outline everyone’s responsibilities to keep the game fun. Some table rules deal with the conflict between the needs of the game and the realities of life, such as when players are gone and can’t play their characters. Others are about coming to agreement on special situations, such as how cocked die results are treated.

Respect: Be there, and be on time. Don’t let disagreements escalate into loud arguments. Don’t bring personal conflicts to the gaming table. Don’t hurl insults across the table. Don’t touch other players’ dice, if they’re sensitive about it. Don’t petulantly hurl dice across the table.

Distractions: If you run a casual, lighthearted game, it might be fine to have players wandering away from the table and back. Most groups, though, have come together to play the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS game—so play the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS game. Turn off the television, ban portable video games, and get a babysitter if you have to. By reducing distractions you have an easier time getting in character, enjoying the story, and focusing on playing the game.

Food: Come to a consensus about food for your session. Should players eat before arriving, or do you eat together? Does one player want to play host? Do you all chip in for pizza or take-out? Who brings snacks and drinks?

Character Names: Agree on some ground rules for naming characters. In a group consisting of Sithis, Travok, Anatrianna, and Kairon, the human fighter named Bob II sticks out. Especially when he’s identical to Bob I, who was killed by kobolds. If everyone takes a lighthearted approach to names, that’s fine. If the group would rather take the characters and their names a little more seriously, urge Bob’s player to come up with a better name.

Player character names should match each other in flavor or concept, and they should also match the flavor of your campaign world. So should the names you make up—nonplayer characters’ names and place names. Travok and Kairon don’t want to visit Gumdrop Island or talk to the enchanter Tim.

Missing Players: How are you going to deal with the characters of missing players? Consider these options:

- ◆ *Have another player run the missing player’s character.* Don’t do this without the permission of the missing player. The player running the extra character should make an effort to keep the character alive and use resources wisely.
- ◆ *Run the character yourself.* Having the DM run the character is extra workload for you, but it can work. You need to play the character reasonably, as the missing player would.

- ◆ *Decide the character's not there.* You might be able to provide a good reason for the character to miss the adventure, perhaps by having her linger in town. Make sure you leave a way for the character to rejoin the party when the player returns, though.
- ◆ *Have the character fade into the background.* This solution requires everyone to step out of the game world a bit and suspend disbelief, but it's the easiest solution. It amounts to hand-waving. You act as if the character's not there, but don't try to come up with any in-game explanation for his absence. Monsters don't attack him, and he returns the favor. When the player returns, he resumes playing as if he was never gone.

Multiple Characters: Most of the time, one player runs one character in the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS game. The game plays best that way. Each player has enough mental bandwidth to keep track of the things his character can do and play effectively. But if your group is small, you might want one or more players to take on playing two characters.

Don't force a reluctant player to take on two characters, and don't show favoritism by allowing only one player to do it. You might make one character the mentor or employer of the other, so the player has a good reason to focus on roleplaying just one character. Otherwise, a player can end up awkwardly talking to himself in character (in conversations between the two characters he plays) or avoiding roleplaying altogether.

Another situation in which multiple characters can be a good idea is in a game with a high rate of character death. If your group is willing to play such a game, you might have each player keep one or two additional characters on hand, ready to jump in whenever the current character dies. Each time the main character gains a level, the backup characters do as well. Just make sure your players understand the nature of the game and your guidelines for these backup characters.

Table Talk: It's a good idea to set some expectations about how players talk at the table.

- ◆ Make it clear who's speaking—the character or the player (out of character).
- ◆ Can players offer advice if their characters aren't present or are unconscious?
- ◆ Can players give other players information such as how many hit points they have left?
- ◆ Can players take back what they've just said their character does?

Being Ready: Every round of combat is an exercise in patience. The players all want to take their turns. If a player isn't ready when his turn comes up, the others can get impatient. Encourage your players to consider their actions before their turn, and let them know that if they take too long to make a decision, you'll assume that the character delays. (Be more forgiving to newer players, and urge the other players to do the same.)

Rolling Dice: Establish some basic expectations about how players roll dice. Rolling in full view of everyone is a good starting point. If you see players roll their attacks or damage and scoop the dice up before anyone else can see, you might nudge that player to be a little less cagey.

What about strange die rolls? When a die falls on the floor, do you count it or reroll it? When it lands cocked against a book, do you pull the book away and see where it lands, or reroll it?

What about you, the DM? Do you make your die rolls where the players can see, or hide them behind your *Dungeon Master's Screen* with your adventure notes? It's up to you, but consider:

- ◆ *If you roll where players can see, they know that you're playing fair.* You're not going to fudge the dice either in their favor or against them.
- ◆ *Rolling behind a screen keeps the players guessing about the strength of the opposition.* When the monster is hitting all the time, is it of much higher level than the players, or is the DM just rolling a string of high numbers?
- ◆ *Rolling behind the screen lets you fudge if you want to.* If two critical hits in a row would kill a character, you might want to change the second critical hit to a normal hit, or even a miss. Don't do it too often, though, and don't let on that you're doing it, or the other players feel as though they don't face any real risk—or worse, that you're playing favorites.
- ◆ *You need to make some rolls behind the screen no matter what.* If a player thinks there might be something invisible in the room and rolls a Perception check, roll a die behind the screen. If you didn't roll a die at all, the player would know there's nothing hiding. If you rolled in front of your screen, the player would have some idea how hidden the opponent was, and be able to make an educated guess about whether something is there. Rolling behind the screen preserves the mystery.

Sometimes you need to make a roll for a player character, because the player shouldn't know how good the check result is. If the character suspects the baroness might be charmed and wants to make an Insight check, you should make the roll behind the screen. If the player rolled it herself and got a high roll, but she didn't sense anything amiss, she'd be confident that the baroness wasn't charmed. If she made a low roll, a negative answer wouldn't mean much. A hidden die roll allows some uncertainty.

Rolling Attacks and Damage: Players are often used to rolling first their attack roll and then their damage roll. If players make attack rolls and damage rolls at the same time, things move a little faster around the table than if they wait to roll damage after you've told them that the attack hits.

You might find it helpful if your players tell you how much damage an attack did, wait until you've recorded the damage, and then tell you any additional conditions and effects of the attack—like stunning or knocking prone.

When making area attacks or close attacks, which use a single damage roll but a separate attack roll for each creature in the area of effect (see page 136), it's helpful to roll damage first. Once you've established how much damage the effect deals on a hit (and on a miss), you can run through attack rolls against the creatures one at a time.

Rules Discussions: Set a policy on rules discussions at the table. Some groups don't mind putting the game on hold while they hash out different interpretations of the rules. Others prefer to let the DM make a call and get on with things. If you do gloss over a rules issue in play, make a note of it (a good task to delegate to a player) and get back to it later at a more natural stopping point.

Metagame Thinking: Players get the best enjoyment when they preserve the willing suspension of disbelief. A roleplaying game's premise is that it is an experience of fictional people in a fictional world.

Metagame thinking means thinking about the game *as a game*. It's like a character in a movie knowing he's in a movie and acting accordingly. "This dragon must be a few levels higher than we are," a player might say. "The DM wouldn't throw such a tough monster at us!" Or you might hear, "The read-aloud text spent a lot of time on that door—let's search it again!"

Discourage this by giving players a gentle verbal reminder: "But what do your *characters* think?" Or, you could curb metagame thinking by asking for Perception checks when there's nothing to see or by setting up an encounter that is much higher level than the characters are. Just make sure to give them a way to avoid it or retreat.

THE THREE TIERS

The thirty levels of play in the game are divided into three tiers: the heroic tier (1st level through 10th level), the paragon tier (11th level through 20th level), and the epic tier (21st level through 30th level). As player characters move from one tier to the next, they experience major increases in power. At the same time, the threats they face in a higher tier are much more lethal.



THE DUNGEONS & DRAGONS WORLD

The world of the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS game is a place of magic and monsters, of brave warriors and spectacular adventures. It begins with a basis of medieval fantasy and then adds the creatures, places, and powers that make the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS game world unique.

A Dark World. The current age has no all-encompassing empire. The world is shrouded in a dark age, between the collapse of the last great empire and the rise of the next, which might be centuries away. Minor kingdoms prosper, to be sure: baronies, holdings, city-states. But each settlement appears as a point of light in the widespread darkness, a haven, an island of civilization in the wilderness that covers the world. Adventurers can rest and recuperate in settlements between adventures. No settlement is entirely safe, however, and adventures often break out within (or under) cities and towns.

The World Is a Fantastic Place. Magic works, servants of the gods wield divine power, and fire giants build strongholds in active volcanoes. The world might be based on reality, but it's a blend of real-world physics, cultures, and history with a heavy dose of fantasy. For the game's purposes, it doesn't matter what historical paladins were like; it cares about what paladins are like in the fantasy world. Adventurers visit the most fantastic locations: wide cavern passages cut by rivers of lava, towers held aloft in the sky by ancient magic, and forests of twisted trees draped in shimmering fog.

. . . a place of magic and monsters, of brave warriors and spectacular adventures.

The World Is Ancient. Empires rise and empires crumble, leaving few places that have not been touched by their grandeur. Ruin, time, and natural forces eventually claim all, leaving the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS game world rich with places of adventure and mystery. Ancient civilizations and their knowledge survive in legends, artifacts, and the ruins they left behind, but chaos and darkness inevitably follow an empire's collapse. Each new realm must carve a place out of the world rather than build on the efforts of past civilizations.

The World Is Mysterious. Wild, uncontrolled regions abound and cover most of the world. City-states of various races dot the darkness, bastions in the wilderness built amid the ruins of the past. Some of these settlements are "points

of light” where adventurers can expect peaceful interaction with the inhabitants, but many more are dangerous. No one race lords over the world, and vast kingdoms are rare. People know the area they live in well, and they’ve heard stories of other places from merchants and travelers, but few know what lies beyond the mountains or in the depth of the great forest unless they’ve been there personally.

Monsters Are Everywhere. Most monsters of the world are as natural as bears or horses are on Earth, and monsters inhabit civilized parts of the world and the wilderness alike. Griffon riders patrol the skies over dwarf cities, domesticated behemoths carry trade goods over long distances, a yuan-ti empire holds sway just a few hundred miles from a human kingdom, and a troop of ice archons from the Elemental Chaos might suddenly appear in the mountains near a major city.

Adventurers Are Exceptional. Player characters are the pioneers, explorers, trailblazers, thrill seekers, and heroes of the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS game world. Although nonplayer characters might have a class and gain power, they do not necessarily advance as adventurers do, and they exist for a different purpose. Not everyone in the world gains levels as adventurers do. An NPC might be a veteran of numerous battles and still not become a 3rd-level fighter; an army of elves is made up of soldiers, not fighters.

The Civilized Races Band Together. The great races of the world—humans, dwarves, eladrin, elves, and halflings—drew closer together during the time of the last great empire (which was human-dominated). That’s what makes them the civilized races—they’re the ones found living together in the towns and cities of civilization. Other races, including dragonborn and tieflings, are in decline, heirs of ancient empires long forgotten. Goblins, orcs, gnolls, kobolds, and similar savage races were never part of that human empire. Some of them, such as the militaristic hobgoblins, have cities, organized societies, and kingdoms of their own. These are islands of civilization in the wilderness, but they are not “points of light.”

Magic Is Not Everyday, but it Is Natural. No one is superstitious about magic, but neither is the use of magic trivial. Practitioners of magic are as rare as fighters. People might see evidence of magic every day, but it’s usually minor—a fantastic monster, a visibly answered prayer, a wizard flying by on a griffon. However, true masters of magic are rare. Many people have access to a little magic, and such minor magic helps those living within the points of light to maintain their communities. But those who have the power to shape spells the way a blacksmith shapes metal are as rare as adventurers and appear as friends or foes to the player characters.

Gods and Primordials Shaped the World. The primordials, elemental creatures of enormous power, shaped the world out of the Elemental Chaos. The gods gave it permanence and warred with the primordials for control of the

new creation, in a great conflict known as the Dawn War. The gods eventually triumphed, and primordials now slumber in remote parts of the Elemental Chaos or rage in hidden prisons.

Gods Are Distant. At the end of the Dawn War, the mighty primal spirits of the world exerted their influence, forbidding gods and primordials alike from directly influencing the world. Now exarchs act in the world on behalf of their gods, and angels appear to undertake missions that promote the agendas of the gods they serve. Gods are extremely powerful, compared to mortals and monsters, but they aren't omniscient or omnipotent. They provide access to the divine power source for their clerics and paladins, and their followers pray to them in hopes that they or their exarchs will hear them and bless them.

IT'S YOUR WORLD

The preceding section sums up the basics of what the game assumes about the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS game world. Within those general parameters, though, there's a lot of room for you to fill in the details. Each published campaign setting describes a different world that adheres to some of those core assumptions, alters others, and then builds a world around them. You can do the same to create a world that's uniquely yours.

The Details Where the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS rulebooks talk about the world, they drop names that exemplify the core assumptions—such as the tiefling empire of Bael Turath and the *Invulnerable Coat of Arnd*. Just as you can alter names in published adventures to suit the flavor of your campaign, you can change the names of these assumed parts of the world. For example, you might decide that the tieflings of your world have a culture reminiscent of medieval Russia, and call their ancient empire Perevolochna.

Aside from these changeable assumed details, most of the specifics of the world are left to your own invention. Even if you begin your campaign in the town of Fallcrest (page 61) and lead the characters on to Winterhaven and Hammerfast, eventually the adventurers will move off the map in this chapter and explore new lands of your own creation.

If you follow the core assumptions of the game, sketching out the world beyond your starting area is a simple matter. Great tracts of wilderness separate civilized areas. South of Fallcrest, the adventurers might travel through a forest on an old, overgrown road they've been told leads to the city-state of Ironwood. You can throw adventures in their path along the way, then draw them into another grand dungeon adventure when they arrive in what turns out to be the gnoll-infested ruins of Ironwood.

You can draft a map of the whole continent at or near the beginning of your campaign. You don't have to, of course, but even if you do, it's a good idea to keep it sketchy. As the campaign progresses, you'll find that you want certain terrain

features in specific places, or an element of the campaign story will lead you to fill in details of the map in ways you couldn't have anticipated at the start of the campaign. Just as when you prepare an adventure, don't overprepare your campaign. Even in a published campaign, the large-scale maps of regions and continents don't detail every square mile of land. You can and should feel free to add details where you need them—and alter them when your campaign suggests it.

Altering Core Assumptions One definition of speculative fiction (of which fantasy and science fiction are two branches) is that it starts with reality as we know it and asks, “What if some aspect of the world was different?” Most fantasy starts from the question, “What if magic was real?”

The assumptions sketched out on these pages aren't graven in stone. They make for an exciting world full of adventure, but they're not the only set of assumptions that do so. You can build an interesting campaign concept by altering one or more of those core assumptions. Ask yourself, “What if this wasn't true in my world?”

The World Is a Fantastic Place. What if it's not? What if the adventurers all use the martial power source, and magic is rare and dangerous? What if your campaign is set in a version of historical Europe?

The World Is Ancient. What if your world is brand new, and the player characters are the first heroes to walk the earth? What if there are no ancient artifacts and traditions, no crumbling ruins?

The World Is Mysterious. What if it's all charted and mapped, right down to the “Here there be dragons” notations? What if great empires cover huge stretches of countryside, with clearly defined borders between them?

Monsters Are Everywhere. What if monsters are rare and terrifying?

Adventurers Are Exceptional. What if the cities of the world are crowded with adventurers, buying and selling magic items in great markets?

The Common Races Band Together. What if, to use a fantasy cliché, dwarves and elves don't get along? What if hobgoblins live side by side with the other races?

Magic Is Not Everyday. What if every town is ruled by a powerful wizard? What if magic item shops are common?

Gods and Primordials Shaped the World. What if the primordials won, and hidden cults dedicated to a handful of surviving deities are scattered through a shattered world that echoes the Elemental Chaos?

Gods Are Distant. What if the gods regularly walk the earth? What if the adventurers can challenge them and seize their power? Or what if even exarchs and angels never sully themselves by contact with mortals?

CIVILIZATION

The DUNGEONS & DRAGONS game world is a wide and wondrous place, filled with monsters and magic. However, most people live in relatively safe communities, and even bold adventurers need safe havens. Such areas are points of light in a dark world, and they share common traits. When you think about the civilized areas of your world, consider these questions:

The guidelines in this section are just that. They're here to help you build the settlement you want for the purpose you have in mind. If you decide that you want a particular feature in a settlement you create, don't let anything in this section stop you.

Purpose

A settlement's primary purpose is to facilitate the fun in your game. Creating a settlement should also be fun. Other

than these two points, the actual purpose the settlement serves determines the amount of detail you need to put into it.

As always, don't do more work than you have to. Create only the features of a settlement that you know you'll need, along with notes on general features. Then allow the place to grow organically as the adventurers interact with more and more of it, keeping notes on new places you invent and use in the game. Eventually, you'll have a living town that you can use again and again.

Home Base The primary reason to create a settlement is to give the characters a place to live, train, and recuperate between adventures. Such a settlement is the launching pad from which the adventurers go out into the wider world. An entire campaign can center on a particular town or city. Sometimes, however, a base is just a temporary stopover for one or more adventures before the characters move on.

If the adventurers start their careers in a particular locale, one that they all call home, that town can have a special place in their hearts and minds. What happens in and to that place takes on personal meaning. Characters might want to protect the town from destruction and corruption, or they could want to escape the memories and limitations the place holds.

A home base needs a moderate amount of detail, but that's work that the players can help you with. Ask the players to tell you a bit about mentors, family members, and other important people in their characters' lives. You can add to

Components of a Settlement

- ◆ What purpose does it serve in your game?
- ◆ How big is it? Who lives there?
- ◆ Who governs it? Who else holds power?
- ◆ What are its defenses?
- ◆ Where do adventurers go to find what they need?
- ◆ What temples are there? What other organizations?
- ◆ What fantastic elements distinguish it from the ordinary?

and modify what they give you, but you'll at least start with a solid foundation of the NPCs who are important to the characters. You might also have the players tell you where and how their characters spend their time—a favorite tavern, library, or temple, perhaps. Unless the home base is also an adventure site, you don't need more detail than that at the outset.

Adventure Site A settlement makes a great adventure site. The amount of preparation you need for such a settlement depends on the adventures you want to run there. You might detail adventure areas, such as battlements or towers. You need notes on the NPCs who play a part in the adventure. This work is adventure preparation as much as it is world building, but the cast of characters you develop for your adventure—including allies, patrons, enemies, and extras—can become recurring figures in your campaign.

Local Color Often, a settlement is just a place where the adventurers stop in to rest and buy supplies. A settlement of this sort needs no more than a narrative description. Include the town's name, decide how big it is, add a dash of flavor (“The prominent temple to Avandra suggests that this town hasn't outgrown its pioneer roots”), and let the characters get down to business. The history of the inn where the adventurers spend the night, the mannerisms of the shopkeeper they buy supplies from—you can add this level of detail, but you don't have to. It's fine to toss in these bits if the characters return to the same town—at that point, it begins to feel a little more like a home base, if a temporary one. Let it grow as the need arises.

Size

The size of a settlement is largely a matter of flavor, but it can also influence the goods and services available there. Since even small villages spring into being along trade routes, it's safe to assume that adventurers can find what they want or need to buy in practically any settlement, given enough time. Don't let a community's size get in the way of your characters' enjoyment of the game by forcing them to travel hundreds of miles out of their way to buy the magic items they want.

The vast majority of distinct settlements in the *DUNGEONS & DRAGONS* game world are villages clustered around a larger town or city. Farming villages help supply the town or city population with food, in exchange for the goods the farmers can't produce themselves. Towns and cities are the seats of the local nobles who govern the surrounding area, who also carry the responsibility for defending the villages from attack. Occasionally, the local lord lives in a keep or fortress with no nearby town or city.

Village Most settlements are agricultural villages, supporting themselves and nearby towns or cities with crops and meat. The citizens of a village are involved in food production in one way or another—if not tending the crops, then supporting those who do by shoeing horses, weaving clothes, milling grain, and the like. They maintain trade with nearby settlements.

Villages pop up within areas protected by the local rulers, or on land with a defensive geographic advantage such as a river. Some villages support and surround military fortresses and outposts, and others crop up as boomtowns when valuable resources are discovered. Villages can also become isolated over time, as kingdoms crumble.

A village's population is dispersed around a large area of land. Farmers live on their land, which spreads them widely around the village center. At the heart of the village, a standard set of structures cluster together: essential services, a marketplace, a temple or two, some kind of gathering place, and perhaps an inn for travelers.

Town Towns are major trade centers, where important industries and reliable trade routes allowed the population to grow. As many as half of a town's citizens are part of a thriving middle class of artisans. Towns rely on commerce—the import of raw materials and food from surrounding villages, and the export of crafted items to those villages as well as other towns and cities.

Village Traits

- ◆ **Population:** Up to about 1,000.
- ◆ **Government:** Noble ruler (usually not resident), with an appointed agent (a reeve) in residence to adjudicate disputes and collect taxes for the lord.
- ◆ **Defense:** The reeve might have a small force of soldiers; otherwise the village relies on a citizen militia.
- ◆ **Commerce:** Basic supplies are readily available, possibly an inn. Other goods available from traveling merchants.
- ◆ **Organizations:** One or two temples or shrines, farmer associations, few or no other organizations.

Town Traits

- ◆ **Population:** Up to about 10,000.
- ◆ **Government:** Noble ruler in residence, with an appointed lord mayor to oversee administration and an elected town council representing the interests of the middle class.
- ◆ **Defense:** Sizable army of professional soldiers as well as the noble's personal soldiers.
- ◆ **Commerce:** Basic supplies are readily available, though exotic goods and services are harder to find. Inns and taverns support travelers.
- ◆ **Organizations:** Several temples might hold political as well as spiritual authority, merchant guilds, some other organizations.

Towns grow in places where roads intersect waterways, or at the meeting of major land trade routes. A town might also grow in a place with a strategic defensive location or near significant mines or similar natural resources.

A town's population is centralized in an area surrounded by defensible walls. Its population is more diverse than that of villages—during the time of the last human empire, merchants and artisans of all races mingled together in the towns and cities, whereas villages remained more homogeneous.

City Cities are overgrown towns and function in the same way. Their larger populations require more support from both surrounding villages and trade routes, so they're rare. They typically appear in areas where large expanses of fertile, arable land surround a location that's friendly to trade, almost always on a navigable waterway.

Cities are walled like towns, and it's possible to identify the stages of a city's growth from the expansion of the walls beyond the central core. These internal walls naturally divide the city into wards, which have their own representatives on the city council and their own noble governors. In some cities, shrinking populations since the fall of the great empires have left wards abandoned and in ruin.

Cities with more than 25,000 people are extremely rare in the current age, but those that exist stand as monuments of civilization and vital points of light in the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS game world.

City Traits

- ◆ **Population:** Up to about 25,000.
- ◆ **Government:** Noble ruler in residence, with several other nobles sharing responsibility for surrounding areas and government functions. One such noble is the lord mayor, who oversees the city administration. An elected city council represents the middle class, and might hold more power than the lord mayor. Other groups serve as important power centers as well.
- ◆ **Defense:** Large army of professional soldiers, guards, and town watch. Each noble in residence has at least a small force of personal soldiers.
- ◆ **Commerce:** Almost any goods or services are readily available. Many inns and taverns support travelers.
- ◆ **Organizations:** Many temples, guilds, and other organizations, some of which hold significant power in city affairs.

Government

In the absence of empires or large kingdoms, power and authority in the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS game world are concentrated in towns and cities. Here minor nobles cling to the titles their families carried under past empires—dukes, barons, earls, counts, the occasional prince, here and there a self-styled king. These nobles hold authority over the towns and cities where they live and the surrounding lands. They collect taxes from the populace, which they use for

public building projects, to pay the soldiery, and support a comfortable lifestyle for themselves (although nobles also have considerable hereditary wealth). In exchange, they promise to protect their citizens from threats such as orc marauders, hobgoblin armies, and roving human bandits.

The noble lords appoint officers to act as their agents in villages, to supervise the collection of taxes and serve as judges in disputes and criminal trials. These reeves, sheriffs, or bailiffs are commoners native to the villages they govern, chosen for their position because they already claim the respect of their fellow citizens.

Within the towns and cities, the lords share authority (and administrative responsibility) with lesser nobles, usually their own relatives, and also with representatives of the middle class. A lord mayor of noble birth is appointed to head the town or city council, and to perform the same administrative functions that reeves do in villages. The council is made up of representatives elected by the middle class of traders and artisans. Only foolish nobles ignore the wishes of their town councils, since the economic power of the middle class is more important to the prosperity of a town or city than the hereditary authority of the nobility.

The larger a settlement, the more likely it is that other individuals or organizations hold significant power there as well. Even in a village, a popular individual—a wise elder or a well-liked farmer—can wield more influence than the appointed reeve, and a wise reeve avoids making an enemy of such a person. In towns and cities, the same power might lie in the hands of a prominent temple, a guild independent of the council, or a single individual with magical power to back up her influence.

Defense

Soldiers—both professional and militia—serve double duty in most settlements. They carry the responsibility of defending the settlement from outside threats, including bandits and raiders. They also keep order within the settlement. The largest cities maintain separate forces for these two purposes (a guard and a watch). In many cities, the noble ruler also has a personal force of soldiers to maintain the security of the keep in addition to those responsible for defending the city walls. These soldiers come from noble families themselves.

The size of a professional soldiery depends on the type of settlement as well as its population. If a village has full-time soldiers at all, they number no more than perhaps twenty-five. A town or city might have as little as one soldier for every hundred residents, or as many as twice that in particularly dangerous or crime-ridden areas.

Except in the largest cities, the watch is more adept at handling disturbances than at investigating crime. Inquisitives who specialize in solving mysteries are rare. Instead, the watch commonly offers rewards for solving mysteries or bringing criminals to justice—fine opportunities for adventurers to prove themselves!

Commerce

Even small villages give characters ready access to the gear they need to pursue their adventures. Provisions, tents and backpacks, and simple weapons are commonly available. Traveling merchants carry armor, military weapons, and more specialized gear. Most villages have inns that cater to travelers, where adventurers can get a hot meal and a bed, even if the quality leaves much to be desired. When characters stop in at a settlement to rest and restock their supplies, give them a bit of local flavor, such as the name of the inn where they spend the night, and move on with the adventure.

Even small villages rely heavily on trade with other settlements, including larger towns and cities. Merchants pass through regularly, selling necessities and luxuries to the villagers, and any good merchant has far-reaching contacts across the region. When characters have magic items to sell, a traveling merchant is in town—or will be soon—to take it off their hands. The same applies to exotic mundane goods as well: No one in the village makes silk rope or has much use for it, but merchants making their way between major cities carry it all the time.

Traveling merchants are also a great way to introduce adventure hooks to the characters as they conduct their business. Since they make their living traversing roads that are not as safe as they used to be, merchants hire competent guards to keep their goods safe. They also carry news from town to town, including reports of situations that cry out for adventurers to get involved.

These merchants can't provide specialized services, however. When the characters are in need of a library or a dedicated sage, a trainer who can handle the griffon eggs they've found, or an architect to design their castle, they're better off going to a large city than looking in a village. These services are less important in the economy of the game than magic items and other goods, so you shouldn't feel as though you have to compromise your common sense for the sake of game play.

Of course, it's natural for adventurers to travel far beyond their native villages as they pursue adventure. When they're in the City of Brass, they should be able to buy even the most expensive magic items readily. If it doesn't interfere with the flow of your game, it's fine to expect that characters will travel to larger cities to do business as they reach higher levels and deal with larger sums of money.

Organizations

Temples, guilds, secret societies, colleges, and orders are important forces in the social order of any settlement. Occasionally, their influence stretches across multiple cities, echoing the wide-ranging political authority that crumbled with the fall of empires. Organizations can also play an important part in the lives of player characters, acting as their patrons, allies, or enemies just as individual nonplayer characters do. When characters join these organizations, they become a part of something larger than themselves, which can give their adventures a context in the wider world.



Religion Temples and religious orders are among the most important and influential organizations in the world. They're likely to have direct influence on adventurers who use the divine power source, even though clerics and paladins operate as free agents, independent of these hierarchies.

Though the worship of the pantheon of gods (page 43) is universal, there are no worldwide hierarchies devoted to these gods. A temple to Bahamut in one city is unconnected to Bahamut's temple in the next city, with each having different rites and differently nuanced interpretations of the god's commands.

Most temples are dedicated to more than one deity, and a temple where Bahamut's altar is next to Moradin's might paint a different picture of the Platinum Dragon than a temple where he's worshiped alongside Erathis. In the first, his protective aspects might be emphasized—he and Moradin stand together to shield the community. Beside Erathis, he might be more of a crusading god, conquering evil to help the spread of civilization.

In the Temple of the Celestial Mountain, for example, Bahamut, Moradin, and Kord share temple space as they're said to share a divine dominion. In village temples, Bahamut's altar stands alongside Moradin's and Pelor's, and the rites ask the gods' protection over both village and crops. The Temple of the Bright City is devoted to Pelor, Erathis, and Ioun, who all share a dominion and an interest in the various aspects of urban life and civilization. Wayside shrines built along trade routes, by contrast, celebrate the gods of the roads and wild places—Avandra, Melora, and Sehanine. The Temple of the Fates

worships the three gods of destiny: the maiden Avandra, god of luck; the matron Ioun, god of prophecy; and the crone, the Raven Queen, who ultimately cuts the thread of each person's life. Eladrin temples (and some elven ones) feature altars to Corellon and Sehanine—and a few have bare altars where no sacrifice is offered, saving a place for Lolth when she is ultimately reconciled to the other gods of her family.

A temple in the *DUNGEONS & DRAGONS* game world doesn't hold scheduled worship services. Rather, the temple is always open and constantly busy. Priests perform the daily rites the gods require, each at a separate altar. Worshipers bring children, ailing family members, and livestock in for the priests' blessings, and they bring their own prayers and sacrifices to ask the gods' favor. Worshipers and petitioners stand or kneel in large open spaces. On holy days, crowds press in to fill every available space, sometimes for the entire length of the day. These are as much social events as religious ones, and the words of the rites can be drowned out in the hubbub of conversation.

Other organizations have a religious foundation, too. Knightly orders dedicated to Bahamut or Bane, colleges devoted to Ioun, civic organizations that honor Erathis, travelers' aid societies dedicated to Avandra, craft guilds that invoke Moradin's name, and secret societies of assassins dedicated to Zehir all wield influence in the cities and larger towns of the world.

Other Organizations Organizations don't always have religious underpinnings, of course. Knightly orders are formed with noble patronage. Like-minded scholars with interests in related subjects gather in colleges. Inns in different towns create informal networks and aid societies to help travelers. Merchants and artisans form guilds to protect their interests in city governments and supervise the training of apprentices. Criminal organizations of all kinds operate in the shadows and alleys of settlements.

Although people of the wizard class are not common, every large city has associations for mages who can manage simple spells and scholars with an interest in magical subjects, as well as true wizards. These organizations can be important resources for wizard and warlock adventurers, a place to find a mentor or purchase arcane components. They represent specific magical traditions, which might be reflected in unique game elements such as spells or feats. The Spiral Tower is an example—a religious organization dedicated to Corellon that teaches a fey tradition of arcane magic. The Order of the Golden Wyvern is a loose association of spellcasters who use their talents in military pursuits.

Military organizations can support any character, particularly adventurers who use the martial power source—fighters, rangers, and rogues. These characters might be veterans of a city's guard or watch, a noble's personal retinue, or a mercenary company that travels from city to city as its services are needed. Knightly orders, too, charge their members to travel the countryside in pursuit of the orders' goals, which squares nicely with the adventuring life.

Criminal gangs, guilds, cults, and secret societies are prominent enemies, particularly in campaigns centered in urban areas. Adventurers might pursue a single villain and bring her to justice, only to find themselves the target of assassins from the villain's criminal guild. Suddenly, they're involved in a bigger adventure than they thought, dealing with a criminal underground that considers them deadly enemies.

Fantastic Settlements

In the magical world of the *DUNGEONS & DRAGONS* game, most settlements follow the patterns described above. But fantastic exceptions abound, cities where magic or monsters play a significant role in government, defense, commerce, or organizations. Different races might also have different settlements from those described above, and you can use these variations to inject a fantastic flavor into the settlements your players visit.

Rather than a noble lord who's nothing more than a titled aristocrat, a town or city might be ruled by a wizard, perhaps a retired adventurer, whose magical power makes a personal retinue of soldiers unnecessary. Such a settlement might feature easily accessible minor spells and magic items—or the wizard might severely restrict magic that could challenge his authority.

A cleric, paladin, angel, or demigod might rule a city as a theocracy, where religious commandments hold the same status as laws. Depending on the ruler, a theocracy can be a very good or a very bad place to live or visit.

What happens when a dragon decides to take over a city? Or a mind flayer secretly controls the baron, steering the city toward its own mysterious purposes? What if the ruler is a lich or vampire who installs undead in positions of power?

As those examples suggest, not every settlement in the *DUNGEONS & DRAGONS* game world is a point of light in the darkness—some are part of the darkness. Hobgoblins and drow are just as civilized as humans, but their cities are nightmarish tyrannies where other races are enslaved. Even a mundane town can be a dark and dangerous place, when the ruler is a devotee of Asmodeus or even just an inflexible autocrat. A visit to these cities is an adventure in itself, and you might build a whole campaign that puts the adventurers in the role of criminals or rebels in such a place, freeing slaves and working to overthrow the tyrannical ruler.

Even in a fantastic settlement, there shouldn't be many individuals with classes like player characters have. The player characters are exceptional, in part because they have these classes and gain levels through their adventuring. Most citizens are low-level examples of their races drawn from the *Monster Vault*. The priests in a temple are ordinary people with religious education. Most of their knowledge is nonmagical, centered around worship and sacrifice in the temple and not around the needs of adventurers.

THE WILD

Uncounted miles stretch between the civilized areas of the world, wild and dangerous. When adventurers leave the relative safety of towns and cities, they quickly enter a world of monsters and raiders, where the land can be actively hostile. Even if they're traversing only a few miles between a village and a nearby dungeon, the wilderness is a force to be reckoned with.

Wilderness areas fall into three broad categories. Formerly settled regions have been reclaimed by the forces of nature—overgrown with forest, swallowed into swamp, or worn into rubble by desert wind and scouring sand. Once-busy roadways are now nothing but fragments of brick littering the ground. Even in the peak of the great empires of the past, the lands between cities were wild, and only frequent patrols kept trade routes safe. Now those lands are full of monster-haunted ruins, including the crumbled remains of those ancient cities. Quests might lead adventurers to these ruins in search of lost libraries or artifacts, investigating a rumor of a surviving settlement buried in the wilderness, or looking for treasure.

Other regions have never been settled. These consist primarily of inhospitable terrain—deserts, mountains, and frozen tundra, expanses of jungle and wide swamps. These areas hold no ruins from the ancient empires of the world, except the occasional hint of a short-lived colony that failed to tame the wilderness around it. These regions hold more fantastic terrain—places where magic gathers in pools, or where parts of the Feywild, the Shadowfell, or the Elemental Chaos overlap with the world and alter nature with their proximity. Adventurers might find a foundry built by fire archons or a snow-capped mountain torn from



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its roots and suspended in the air. Their quests might lead them to seek a font of magical power on a forbidding peak or a city supposed to appear in the desert once every century.

Finally, even in these days of fallen empires, colonists and pioneers fight back the wilderness on the frontier, hoping to spread the light of civilization and found new kingdoms and empires. The world's largest city-states establish colonies at the edge of their sphere of influence, and brave and hardy souls build hardscrabble villages near sources of minerals or other resources. Devotees of Erathis seek to tame the wilderness, and followers of Avandra roam in search of new frontiers. These tiny outposts of civilization barely shed a glimmer of light into the surrounding wilderness, but they can be home bases for adventurers who have reason to venture into the wilds around them. A city-state might send characters on a quest to find or save a colony that has broken contact, or adventurers who serve Erathis might undertake a quest to found a colony of their own.

Weather

As characters adventure in the wilderness, the weather can be one of the most significant threats they face. It might be as simple as drizzling rain that obscures their foes or gusting wind that hampers movement in combat. Blinding snow can complicate a climb through a mountain pass, or a living storm might attack at random as they scramble for cover. These examples show four ways you might use weather in a wilderness adventure.

Rain, fog, or falling snow can create obscuring effects (page 208). It might also create difficult terrain on the ground. Use these weather features as you would other kinds of terrain when building encounters.

Gusting wind might be a hazard (page 213). In a narrow mountain pass, the wind might be a constant force that acts like a current in water. Or it might gust every few rounds (roll 1d4 each round, with a 4 indicating a gust).

Blinding snow in a treacherous mountain pass complicates a skill challenge (page 224). It might force adventurers to make Endurance checks every hour, or Acrobatics checks to avoid slipping and taking damage.

A living storm is a trap, possibly a solo trap that constitutes an encounter. It attacks every round, with bolts of lightning, gusts of wind, or blasts of thunder. In open terrain, the adventurers can't take cover—and they might find that the storm turns cover where it is available into an additional hazard, blasting tree branches or rock from an overhang down onto them where they hide. Countermeasures could include Nature checks to predict and avoid its attacks. Defenders can use the aid another action (page 105) to shelter less hardy adventurers from the storm's effects, granting a bonus to those characters' defenses against the storm's attacks.

Weather can also just be a narrative detail you use to set the atmosphere of your adventure or an encounter. It's an important part of your description—your world feels more real if the weather changes and the seasons change. But the weather is what you want and need it to be at any given time, and it doesn't need to follow the rules of real-world meteorology.

THE PLANES

The world occupies a special place at the center of the universe. It's the middle ground where the conflicts between gods and primordials, and among the gods themselves, play out through their servants both mortal and immortal. But other planes of existence surround the world, nearby dimensions where some power sources are said to originate and powerful creatures reside, including demons, devils, and the gods.

Before the world existed, the universe was divided into two parts: the Astral Sea and the Elemental Chaos. Some legends say that those two were once one realm, but even the gods can't know that for certain, for they had their origin in the Astral Sea.

The Astral Sea

The Astral Sea floats above the world, an ocean of silvery liquid with the stars visible beneath the shallow sea. Sheets of shimmering starlight like gossamer veils part to reveal the dominions, the homes of the gods, like islands floating in the Astral Sea. Not all the gods live in dominions—the Raven Queen's palace of Letherna stands in the Shadowfell, and Lolth's home, the Demonweb Pits, is located in the Abyss. Avandra, Melora, and Torog wander the world, and both Sehanine and Vecna wander the whole cosmos.

Arvandor is a realm of natural beauty and arcane energy that echoes the Feywild. It's the home of Corellon and sometimes of Sehanine. Arvandor seems to be as much a part of the Feywild as of the Astral Sea, and travelers claim to have reached it through both planes.

The Bright City of Hestavar, as its title suggests, is a vast metropolis where Erathis, Ioun, and Pelor make their homes. Powerful residents of all the planes make their way to the Bright City to buy and sell exotic goods.

Tytherion, called the Endless Night, is the dark domain that Tiamat and Zehir share. No light can pierce its darkest depths, and both serpents and dragons haunt its otherworldly wilderness.

The Iron Fortress of Chernoggar is Bane's stronghold in the Astral Sea. As its name suggests, it's a mighty stronghold of rust-pitted iron, said to be impregnable to attack. Even so, Gruumsh makes his home on an eternal battlefield outside the fortress's walls, determined to raze it to the ground one day. Immortal warriors fight and die on both sides of this conflict, returning to life with every nightfall.

Celestia is the heavenly realm of Bahamut and Moradin. Kord also spends a good deal of time on its mountainous slopes because of an old friendship with the other gods, but his tempestuous nature keeps him from calling it home. Upon parting a veil to enter Celestia, a traveler arrives on the lower reaches of a great mountain. Behind him, the mountains disappear into silvery mist far below.

The Nine Hells is the home of Asmodeus and the devils. This plane is a dark, fiery world of continent-sized caverns ruled by warring princelings, though all are ultimately under the iron fist of Asmodeus.

Creatures native to the Astral Sea and its dominions are known as immortals, since they do not age or die of natural causes, though none are truly deathless. They include the gods themselves, their angel servitors, and the devils, who were themselves once angels but transformed into the current form as punishment for the deicide committed by their lord, Asmodeus. The pirate race called githyanki also haunt the Astral Sea, striking from their sleek astral vessels against targets at the outskirts of the divine dominions, and often raiding into the world as well to secure supplies and plunder.

The Elemental Chaos and the Abyss

At the foundation of the world, the Elemental Chaos churns like an ever-changing tempest of clashing elements—fire and lightning, earth and water, whirlwinds and living thunder. Just as the gods originated in the Astral Sea, the first inhabitants of the Elemental Chaos were the primordials, creatures of raw elemental power. They shaped the world from the raw material of the Elemental Chaos, and if they had their way, the world would be torn back down and returned to raw materials. The gods have given the world permanence utterly alien to the primordials' nature.

The primordials are no longer a major power in the Elemental Chaos. In the wake of their Dawn War against the gods, most primordials are imprisoned or otherwise diminished, and many were slain. In their stead, titans—the mighty giants who served as the primordials' laborers in crafting the world—rule over tiny domains scattered across the Elemental Chaos, and the evil fire spirits called efreeti lord over fortresses and even cities, such as the fabled City of Brass. Their subjects include a bewildering assortment of elementals, creatures formed of raw elemental matter and animated to life and some measure of sentience. Among the most fearsome elemental creatures are archons—humanoid soldiers formed of a single, pure elemental substance.

The Elemental Chaos approximates a level plane on which travelers can move, but the landscape is broken up by rivers of lightning, seas of fire, floating earthbergs, ice mountains, and other formations of raw elemental forces. However, it is possible to make one's way slowly down into lower layers of the Elemental Chaos. At its bottom, it turns into a swirling maelstrom that grows darker and deadlier as it descends.

At the bottom of that maelstrom is the Abyss, the home of demons. Before the world was finished, Tharizdun, the Chained God, planted a shard of pure evil in the heart of the Elemental Chaos, and the gods imprisoned him for this act of blasphemy. The Abyss is as entropic as the Elemental Chaos where it was planted, but it is actively malevolent, where the rest of the Elemental Chaos is simply untamed. The demons that infest it range from the relatively weak and savage dretches to the demon princes, beings of nearly godlike power whose names—Orcus, Demogorgon, Baphomet—strike terror into mortal hearts.

The World and its Echoes

The world has no proper name, but it bears a wide variety of prosaic and poetic names among those people who ever find need to call it anything but “the world.” It’s the creation, the middle world, the natural world, the created world, or even the First Work.

The primordials formed the world from the raw materials of the Elemental Chaos. Looking down on this work from the Astral Sea, the gods were fascinated with the world. Creatures of thought and ideal, the gods saw endless room for improvement in the primordials’ work, and their imaginings took form and substance from the abundance of creation-stuff still drifting in the cosmos. Life spread across the face of the world, the churning elements resolved into oceans and landmasses, diffuse light became a sun and moon and stars. The gods drew astral essence and mixed it with the tiniest bits of creation-stuff to create mortals to populate the world and worship them. Elves, dwarves, humans, and others appeared in this period of spontaneous creation. Resentful of the gods’ meddling in their work, the primordials began the Dawn War that shook the universe, a series of battles that raged across the cosmos for uncounted centuries. The gods slowly gained the upper hand, working together to imprison or banish individual primordials. However, this war threatened the very existence of the world.

In the last days of the Dawn War, a new force made itself known in the cosmos: the spiritual expression of the world itself. These primal spirits declared an end to the conflict, asserting that the world would no longer be a battleground for the two opposing forces. The gods and the primordials were banished to their home planes, and the primal spirits of the world decreed a balance: The world would remain a place where matter and spirit mingled freely, where life and death proceeded in an orderly cycle, where the seasons changed in their unending wheel without interference. The gods and the primordials could still influence the world, but they could not rule it.

As the world took shape, the primordials found some pieces too vivid and bright, and hurled them away. They found other pieces too murky and dark, and flung them away as well. These discarded bits of creation clustered and merged, and formed together in echoes of the shaping of the world. As the gods joined in the act of creation, more ripples spread out into the Feywild and the Shadowfell,

SIGIL, THE CITY OF DOORS

Somewhere between the planes, neither adrift in the Astral Sea nor rooted in the Elemental Chaos, spins the City of Doors, the bustling metropolis of Sigil. Planar trade flows freely through its streets, facilitated by a bewildering number of portals leading to and from every known corner of the universe—and all the corners yet to be explored. The ruler of the City of Doors is the enigmatic Lady of Pain, whose nature is the subject of endless speculation.

bringing creatures to life there as echoes of the world's mortals. Thus the world was born with two siblings: the bright Feywild and the dark Shadowfell.

The Shadowfell is a dark echo of the world. It touches the world in places of deep shadow, sometimes spilling out into the world, and other times drawing hapless travelers into its dark embrace. It is not wholly evil, but everything in the Shadowfell has its dark and sinister side. When mortal creatures die, their spirits travel first to the Shadowfell before moving on to their final fate. Undead creatures have strong ties to the Shadowfell, and monsters of raw shadow stalk in the darkness there, hunting anything that lives. The shadar-kai, gray-skinned servants of the Raven Queen, are the most populous race of the Shadowfell, but even they are hardly common.

The Feywild is an enchanted reflection of the world. Arcane energy flows through it like streams of crystal water. Its beauty and majesty is unparalleled in the world, and every creature of the wild is imbued with a measure of fantastic power. The eladrin race is far more common in the Feywild than in the world, though they war frequently with the monstrous giants known as fomorians and their cyclops servitors, which inhabit the subterranean depths of the Feydark. Even plants in the Feywild can manifest sentience and deep wisdom, as evidenced by the majestic treants.



And Beyond

Scholars claim that the universe described here is not all there is—that something else exists beyond the Astral Sea and the Elemental Chaos. Evidence for this idea appears in the form of the most alien creatures known, aberrant monsters such as the beholder, mind flayer, and even more alien beings. These creatures don't seem to be a part of the world or any known realm, and where they live in the world, reality alters around them. This fact has led sages to postulate the existence of a place they call the Far Realm, a place where the laws of reality work differently than in the known universe. Mad sorcerers and aberrant monsters themselves sometimes attempt to open portals to this Far Realm or make contact with the godlike beings that inhabit it, with disastrous consequences in the world.

In addition, the souls of the dead—though they travel first to the Shadowfell—pass beyond it after a time. Some souls are claimed by the gods and carried to the divine dominions, but others pass to another realm beyond the knowledge of any living being.

Alignment

Alignment is a shorthand way of describing a creature's moral stance. When a creature has an alignment, it has declared a dedication to a set of moral principles: good, lawful good, evil, or chaotic evil. In a cosmic sense, alignment is the team a creature believes in and fights for most strongly.

Moral principles of good and evil are tied to universal forces bigger than deities or any other allegiance a creature might have. A high-level cleric with a lawful good alignment is effectively playing on the same team as Bahamut, regardless of whether the cleric worships that deity. Bahamut is not in any sense the captain of the lawful good team, just a particularly important player (who has a large number of supporters). Most people in the world, and plenty of player characters, haven't signed up to play on any team—they're unaligned. Picking and adhering to an alignment represents a distinct choice. A great many monsters, however, are evil or chaotic evil, representing either a clear choice to fight on the evil side or an inherently malicious and destructive nature.

Here's what the four alignments (and being unaligned) mean.

Unaligned: Not Taking a Stand

Just let me go about my business.

Unaligned characters don't actively seek to harm others or wish them ill. But such characters also don't go out of their way to put themselves at risk without some hope for reward. They support law and order when doing so benefits them. They value their own freedom, without worrying too much about protecting the freedom of others.

A few unaligned people, and most unaligned deities, aren't undecided about alignment. Rather, they've chosen not to choose, either because they see the benefits of both good and evil or because they see themselves as above the concerns of morality. The Raven Queen and her devotees fall into the latter camp, believing that moral choices are irrelevant to their mission, since death comes to all creatures regardless of alignment.

Good: Freedom and Kindness

Protecting the weak from those who would dominate or kill them is just the right thing to do.

Good characters believe it is right to aid and protect those in need. Such characters are not required to sacrifice themselves to help others, but might be asked to place the needs of others above their own, even if that means putting themselves in harm's way. In many ways, that's the essence of being a heroic adventurer. The people of the town can't defend themselves from the marauding goblins, so the good character descends into the dungeon—at significant personal risk—to put an end to the goblin raids.

Members of this alignment follow rules and respect authority but are keenly aware that power tends to corrupt those who wield it, too often leading them to exploit their power for selfish or evil ends. When that happens, good characters feel no obligation to follow the law blindly. It's better for authority to rest in the hands of a community than in the hands of a power-hungry individual or group. When law becomes exploitation, it crosses into evil territory, and good characters feel compelled to fight it.

Good and evil represent fundamentally different viewpoints, cosmically opposed and unable to coexist in peace. Good and lawful good characters, though, get along fine, even if a good character thinks a lawful good companion might be a little too focused on following the law, rather than simply doing the right thing.

Lawful Good: Civilization and Order

An ordered society protects us from evil.

Lawful good characters respect the authority of personal codes of conduct, laws, and leaders, and they believe that those codes are the best way of achieving one's ideals. Virtuous authority promotes the well-being of its subjects and prevents them from harming one another. Lawful good characters believe just as strongly in the value of life, and they put even more emphasis on the need for the powerful to protect the weak and lift up the downtrodden. The exemplars of the lawful good alignment are shining champions of what's right, honorable, and true, risking or even sacrificing their own lives to stop the spread of evil in the world.

When leaders exploit their authority for personal gain, when laws grant privileged status to some citizens and reduce others to slavery or untouchable status,

law has given in to evil and just authority becomes tyranny. Lawful good characters are not only capable of challenging such injustice, but are morally bound to do so. However, such characters would prefer to work within the system to right such problems, rather than resorting to lawless methods.

For the purpose of game effects, a lawful good character is also considered to be good.

Evil: Tyranny and Hatred

It is my right to claim what others possess.

Evil characters don't necessarily go out of their way to hurt people, but they're perfectly willing to take advantage of the weakness of others to acquire what they want.

Evil characters use rules and order to maximize personal gain. They don't care whether laws hurt other people. They support institutional structures that give them power, even if that power comes at the expense of the freedom of others. Slavery and rigid caste structures are not only acceptable but desirable to evil characters, as long as they are in a position to benefit from the order they provide.

Chaotic Evil: Entropy and Destruction

I don't care what I have to do to get what I want.

Chaotic evil characters have a complete disregard for others. Each believes he or she is the only being that matters. Such characters have no problem killing, stealing, and betraying others to gain power. Their word is meaningless and their actions destructive. Their world views can be so warped that they destroy anything and anyone that doesn't directly contribute to their specific interests.

By the standards of good and lawful good people, chaotic evil is as abhorrent as evil—perhaps even more so. Chaotic evil monsters such as demons and orcs are at least as much of a threat to civilization and general well-being as evil monsters are. An evil creature and a chaotic evil creature are both opposed to good, but they don't have much respect for each other either and rarely cooperate toward common goals.

For the purpose of game effects, a chaotic evil character is also considered evil.



THE GODS

The deities of the *DUNGEONS & DRAGONS* game world are powerful but not omnipotent, knowledgeable but not omniscient, widely traveled but not omnipresent. They alone of all creatures in the universe consist only of astral essence. The gods are creatures of thought and ideal, not bound by the same limitations as beings of flesh.

The gods appear in dreams and visions to their followers and wear countless different faces, and artwork depicting them shows them in a variety of forms. Their true nature is beyond any physical form. Corellon is often depicted as an eladrin, but he is no more an eladrin than he is a fey panther—he is a god, and he transcends the physical laws that bind even angels to their concrete forms. This transcendence allows the gods to perform deeds that physical creatures can't. They can appear in the minds of other creatures, speaking to them in dreams or visions, without being present in physical form. They can appear in multiple places at once. They can listen to the prayers of their followers (but they don't always). But they can also make physical forms for themselves with a moment's

effort, and they do when the need arises—when presumptuous epic-level mortal adventurers dare to challenge them in their own dominions, for example. In these forms, they can fight and be fought, and they can suffer terrible consequences as a result. However, to destroy a god requires more than merely striking its physical form down with spell or sword. Gods have killed other gods (Asmodeus being the first to do so), and the primordials killed many gods during their great war. For a mortal to accomplish this deed would require rituals of awesome power to bind a god to its physical form—and then a truly epic battle to defeat that form.

Some deities are good or lawful good, some are evil or chaotic evil, and many are unaligned. Each deity has a vision of how the world should be, and the agents of the deities seek to bring that vision to life in the world. Even the agents and worshipers of deities who share an alignment can come into conflict. Except for the chaotic evil gods (Gruumsh, Lolth, and Tharizdun), however, all deities are enemies of the demons, which would rather destroy the world than govern it.

The most powerful servants of the gods are their exarchs. Some exarchs are angels whose faithful service has earned them this exalted status. Others were once mortal servants who won the station through their mighty deeds. Asmodeus has devils as exarchs, and both Bahamut and Tiamat have granted that status to powerful dragons. Every exarch is a unique example of its kind, empowered with capabilities far beyond those of other angels, mortals, or monsters.

THE DEITIES

Deity	Alignment	Areas of Influence
Asmodeus	Evil	Power, domination, tyranny
Avandra	Good	Change, luck, trade, travel
Bahamut	Lawful good	Justice, honor, nobility, protection
Bane	Evil	War, conquest
Corellon	Unaligned	Arcane magic, spring, beauty, the arts
Erathis	Unaligned	Civilization, invention, laws
Gruumsh	Chaotic evil	Turmoil, destruction
Ioun	Unaligned	Knowledge, prophecy, skill
Kord	Unaligned	Storms, strength, battle
Lolth	Chaotic evil	Spiders, shadows, lies
Melora	Unaligned	Wilderness, sea
Moradin	Lawful good	Creation, artisans, family
Pelor	Good	Sun, summer, agriculture, time
Raven Queen	Unaligned	Death, fate, winter
Sehanine	Unaligned	Trickery, moon, love, autumn
Tharizdun	Chaotic evil	Annihilation, madness
Tiamat	Evil	Wealth, greed, vengeance
Torog	Evil	Underdark, imprisonment
Vecna	Evil	Undeath, secrets
Zehir	Evil	Darkness, poison, serpents

Asmodeus

Asmodeus is the evil god of tyranny and domination. He rules the Nine Hells with an iron fist and a silver tongue. Aside from devils, evil creatures such as rakshasas pay him homage, and evil tieflings and warlocks are drawn to his dark cults. His rules are strict and his punishments harsh:

- ◆ Seek power over others, that you might rule with strength as the Lord of Hell does.
- ◆ Repay evil with evil. If others are kind to you, exploit their weakness for your own gain.
- ◆ Show neither pity nor mercy to those who are caught underfoot as you climb your way to power. The weak do not deserve compassion.



Avandra

The good god of change, Avandra delights in freedom, trade, travel, adventure, and the frontier. Her temples are few in civilized lands, but her wayside shrines appear throughout the world. Halflings, merchants, and all types of adventurers are drawn to her worship, and many people raise a glass in her honor, viewing her as the god of luck. Her commandments are few:

- ◆ Luck favors the bold. Take your fate into your own hands, and Avandra smiles upon you.
- ◆ Strike back against those who would rob you of your freedom and urge others to fight for their own liberty.
- ◆ Change is inevitable, but it takes the work of the faithful to ensure that change is for the better.

Bahamut

Called the Platinum Dragon, Bahamut is the lawful good god of justice, protection, nobility, and honor. Lawful good paladins often revere him, and metallic dragons worship him as the first of their kind. Monarchs are crowned in his name. He commands his followers thus:

- ◆ Uphold the highest ideals of honor and justice.
- ◆ Be constantly vigilant against evil and oppose it on all fronts.
- ◆ Protect the weak, liberate the oppressed, and defend just order.



Bane

Bane is the evil god of war and conquest. Militaristic nations of humans and goblins serve him and conquer in his name. Evil fighters and paladins serve him. He commands his worshippers to:

- ◆ Never allow your fear to gain mastery over you, but drive it into the hearts of your foes.
- ◆ Punish insubordination and disorder.
- ◆ Hone your combat skills to perfection, whether you are a mighty general or a lone mercenary.



Corellon

The unaligned god of spring, beauty, and the arts, Corellon is the patron of arcane magic and the fey. He seeded the world with arcane magic and planted the most ancient forests. Artists and musicians worship him, as do those who view their spellcasting as an art, and his shrines can be found throughout the Feywild. He despises Lolth and her priestesses for leading the drow astray. He urges his followers thus:

- ◆ Cultivate beauty in all that you do, whether you're casting a spell, composing a saga, strumming a lute, or practicing the arts of war.
- ◆ Seek out lost magic items, forgotten rituals, and ancient works of art. Corellon might have inspired them in the world's first days.
- ◆ Thwart the followers of Lolth at every opportunity.

Erathis

Erathis is the unaligned god of civilization. She is the muse of great invention, founder of cities, and author of laws. Rulers, judges, pioneers, and devoted citizens revere her, and her temples hold prominent places in most of the world's major cities. Her laws are many, but their purpose is straightforward:

- ◆ Work with others to achieve your goals. Community and order are always stronger than the disjointed efforts of lone individuals.
- ◆ Tame the wilderness to make it fit for habitation, and defend the light of civilization against the encroaching darkness.
- ◆ Seek out new ideas, new inventions, new lands to inhabit, new wilderness to conquer. Build machines, build cities, build empires.



Gruumsh

Gruumsh is the chaotic evil god of destruction, lord of marauding barbarian hordes. Where Bane commands conquest, Gruumsh exhorts his followers to slaughter and pillage. Orcs are his fervent followers, and they bear a particular hatred for elves and eladrin because Corellon put out one of Gruumsh's eyes. The One-Eyed God gives simple orders to his followers:

- ◆ Conquer and destroy.
- ◆ Let your strength crush the weak.
- ◆ Do as you will, and let no one stop you.



Ioun

Ioun is the unaligned god of knowledge, skill, and prophecy. Sages, seers, and tacticians revere her, as do all who live by their knowledge and mental power. Corellon is the patron of arcane magic, but Ioun is the patron of its study. Libraries and wizard academies are built in her name. Her commands are also teachings:

- ◆ Seek the perfection of your mind by bringing reason, perception, and emotion into balance with one another.
- ◆ Accumulate, preserve, and distribute knowledge in all forms. Pursue education, build libraries, and seek out lost and ancient lore.
- ◆ Be watchful at all times for the followers of Vecna, who seek to control knowledge and keep secrets. Oppose their schemes, unmask their secrets, and blind them with the light of truth and reason.

Kord

Kord is the unaligned storm god and the lord of battle. He revels in strength, battlefield prowess, and thunder. Fighters and athletes revere him. He is a mercurial god, unbridled and wild, who summons storms over land and sea; those who hope for better weather appease him with prayers and spirited toasts. He gives few commands:

- ◆ Be strong, but do not use your strength for wanton destruction.
- ◆ Be brave and scorn cowardice in any form.
- ◆ Prove your might in battle to win glory and renown.



Lolth

Lolth is the chaotic evil god of shadow, lies, and spiders. Scheming and treachery are her commands, and her priests are a constant force of disruption in the otherwise stable society of the evil drow. Though she is properly a god and not a demon, she is called Demon Queen of Spiders. She demands that her followers:



- ◆ Do whatever it takes to gain and hold power.
- ◆ Rely on stealth and slander in preference to outright confrontation.
- ◆ Seek the death of elves and eladrin at every opportunity.



Melora

Melora is the unaligned god of the wilderness and the sea. She is both the wild beast and the peaceful forest, the raging whirlpool and the quiet desert. Rangers, hunters, and elves revere her, and sailors make offerings to her before beginning their voyages. Her strictures are these:

- ◆ Protect the wild places of the world from destruction and overuse. Oppose the rampant spread of cities and empires.
- ◆ Hunt aberrant monsters and other abominations of nature.
- ◆ Do not fear or condemn the savagery of nature. Live in harmony with the wild.

Moradin

Moradin is the lawful good god of creation and patron of artisans, especially miners and smiths. He carved the mountains from primordial earth and is the guardian and protector of the hearth and the family. Dwarves from all walks of life follow him. He demands these behaviors of his followers:

- ◆ Meet adversity with stoicism and tenacity.
- ◆ Demonstrate loyalty to your family, your clan, your leaders, and your people.
- ◆ Strive to make a mark on the world, a lasting legacy. To make something that lasts is the highest good, whether you are a smith working at a forge or a ruler building a dynasty.



Pelor

The good god of the sun and summer, Pelor is the keeper of time. He supports those in need and opposes all that is evil. As the lord of agriculture and the bountiful harvest, he is the deity most commonly worshiped by ordinary humans, and his priests are well received wherever they go. Paladins and rangers are found among his worshipers. He directs his followers thus:



- ◆ Alleviate suffering wherever you find it.
- ◆ Bring Pelor's light into places of darkness, showing kindness, mercy, and compassion.
- ◆ Be watchful against evil.



The Raven Queen

The name of the unaligned god of death is long forgotten, but she is called the Raven Queen. She is the spinner of fate and the patron of winter. She marks the end of each mortal life, and mourners call upon her during funeral rites, in the hope that she will guard the departed from the curse of undeath. She expects her followers to abide by these commandments:

- ◆ Hold no pity for those who suffer and die, for death is the natural end of life.
- ◆ Bring down the proud who try to cast off the chains of fate. Punish hubris where you find it.
- ◆ Watch for the cults of Orcus and stamp them out whenever they arise. The Demon Prince of the Undead seeks to claim the Raven Queen's throne.

Sehanine

The unaligned god of the moon and autumn, Sehanine is the patron of trickery and illusions. She has close ties to Corellon and Melora and is a favorite deity among elves and halflings. She is also the god of love, who sends shadows to cloak lovers' trysts. Scouts and thieves ask for her blessing on their work. Her teachings are simple:



- ◆ Follow your goals and seek your own destiny.
- ◆ Keep to the shadows, avoiding the blazing light of zealous good and the utter darkness of evil.
- ◆ Seek new horizons and new experiences, and let nothing tie you down.

Tharizdun

Tharizdun is the chaotic evil god who created the Abyss. His name is rarely spoken and even the fact of his existence is not widely known. A few scattered cults of demented followers revere him, calling him the Chained God or the Elder Elemental Eye. Tharizdun doesn't speak to his followers, so his commands are unknown, but his cults teach their members to:



- ◆ Channel power to the Chained God, so he can break his chains.
- ◆ Retrieve lost relics and shrines to the Chained God.
- ◆ Pursue the obliteration of the world, in anticipation of the Chained God's liberation.



Tiamat

Tiamat is the evil god of wealth, greed, and envy. She is the patron of chromatic dragons and those whose lust for wealth overrides any other goal or concern. She commands her followers to:

- ◆ Hoard wealth, acquiring much and spending little. Wealth is its own reward.
- ◆ Forgive no slight and leave no wrong unpunished.
- ◆ Take what you desire from others. Those who lack the strength to defend their possessions are not worthy to own them.

Torog

Torog is the evil god of the Underdark, patron of jailers and torturers. Common superstition holds that if his name is spoken, the King that Crawls burrows up from below and drags the hapless speaker underground to an eternity of imprisonment and torture. Jailers and torturers pray to him in deep caves and cellars, and creatures of the Underdark revere him as well. He teaches his worshipers to:



- ◆ Seek out and revere the deep places beneath the earth.
- ◆ Delight in the giving of pain, and consider pain you receive as homage to Torog.
- ◆ Bind tightly what is in your charge, and restrain those who wander free.

Vecna

Vecna is the evil god of undead, necromancy, and secrets. He rules that which is not meant to be known and that which people wish to keep secret. Evil spellcasters and conspirators pay him homage. He commands them to:

- ◆ Never reveal all you know.
- ◆ Find the seed of darkness in your heart and nourish it; find it in others and exploit it to your advantage.
- ◆ Oppose the followers of all other deities so that Vecna alone can rule the world.



Zehir



Zehir is the evil god of darkness, poison, and assassins. Snakes are his favored creation, and the yuan-ti revere him above all other gods, offering sacrifice to him in pits full of writhing serpents. He urges his followers to:

- ◆ Hide under the cloak of night, that your deeds might be kept in secret.
- ◆ Kill in Zehir's name and offer each murder as a sacrifice.
- ◆ Delight in poison, and surround yourself with snakes.

LANGUAGES

Ten languages form the basis of every dialect spoken throughout the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS world and the planes beyond. These languages are transcribed in different scripts, most of which are alphabets, from the flowing characters of the Rellanic alphabet to the runes of the Davek alphabet. The Supernal script is a system of hieroglyphics.

Language	Spoken by . . .	Script
Common	Humans, halflings, tieflings	Common
Deep Speech	Mind flayers, githyanki, kuo-toas	Rellanic
Draconic	Dragons, dragonborn, kobolds	Iokharic
Dwarven	Dwarves, galeb duhrs	Davek
Elven	Elves, eladrin, fomorians	Rellanic
Giant	Giants, orcs, ogres	Davek
Goblin	Goblins, hobgoblins, bugbears	Common
Primordial	Efreets, archons, elementals	Barazhad
Supernal	Angels, devils, gods	Supernal
Abyssal	Demons, gnolls, sahuagin	Barazhad

A universe with ten languages might seem improbable, but it's explainable in the context of the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS game world and better for the play of the game.

The gods have their own language, Supernal, which they share with their angelic servants. When a god or angel speaks Supernal, it can choose to speak so that any creature that understands a language can understand this divine speech, as if the speaker used their own languages. Immortals who speak Supernal can understand speech and writing in any language.

When the gods created the races of the world, each race heard the Supernal language in a different way, based on fundamental characteristics of their nature. From those distinct ways of hearing, the foundational languages of the world arose—Common for humans and halflings, Elven for elves and eladrin, Goblin for the goblin races, Dwarven for the dwarves, and Draconic for dragons.

The primordials had their own language with none of the special qualities of Supernal. The titans and giants adopted a debased version of this language for their own tongue, and Abyssal is a form of Primordial warped and twisted by the evil at the heart of the Abyss.

These foundational languages spread to other creatures of the world and the planes, with dialect variation but no more significant alteration.

Scripts follow a similar logic. Supernal and Primordial have their own scripts. The main civilized races developed different scripts to transcribe the foundational languages: Common, Davek runes for Dwarven, the Rellanic script for Elven, and Iokharic lettering for Draconic. Goblin is the only foundational language of the world that lacks its own script, owing to the brutal and barbaric nature of the goblin race. The Giant language uses the Davek runes of the dwarves, dating from the dwarves' long servitude to the giants.

The Deep Speech is a language related to the alien communication of the Far Realm, used by creatures influenced by the energy of that place beyond the world and the planes. It uses the Rellanic script because the drow were the first to transcribe it, since they share Underdark haunts with aberrant creatures.

Languages in the Game

Having only ten languages keeps the game moving. It's easy for a party of adventurers to master nearly every language, and intelligent creatures they encounter speak at least a little Common. Familiarity with languages lets adventuring parties read inscriptions and tomes they come across in their adventuring. Fundamentally, language never has to be an issue in the game—unless you want it to be.

Characters and their opponents can use languages as a kind of code, speaking among themselves in languages their enemies can't understand. An arrogant eladrin lord might refuse to speak in Common and ignore anyone who doesn't speak Elven. Barbaric goblins might not understand Common, forcing the adventurers to negotiate with them in Goblin for the release of captives. When you use

Davek, Dwarven Script

◁ · T · J · 9 2 · P · Π · + · 1 · J · ▸ · 5 · P · Z · 0 · Γ · 1 · L · S ·
P · 4 · 7 · 1 · 3 · Π · Z · :::: · 0 · L · P · Σ · A · V · V · Δ · X · ◁

Rellanic, Elven Script

o o ə δ o z d h j o d d h n a a o f l s b
o o m k l j o ... s r e e w x e e g o

Iokharic, Draconic Script

≡ Ꞥ ꞥ Ꞧ ꞧ Ꞩ ꞩ Ɦ Ɜ Ɡ Ɬ Ɪ ꞯ Ʞ Ʇ Ʝ Ꭓ Ꞵ ꞵ Ꞷ ꞷ Ꞹ ꞹ 꺀 꺁 꺂 꺃 꺄 꺅 꺆 꺇 꺈 꺉 꺊 꺋 꺌 꺍 꺎 꺏 꺐 꺑 꺒 꺓 꺔 꺕 꺖 꺗 꺘 꺙 꺚 꺛 꺜 꺝 꺞 꺟 꺠 꺡 꺢 꺣 꺤 꺥 꺦 꺧 꺨 꺩 꺪 꺫 꺬 꺭 꺮 꺯 꺰 꺱 꺲 꺳 꺴 꺵 꺶 꺷 꺸 꺹 꺺 꺻 꺼 꺽 꺾 꺿 껀 껁 껂 껃 껄 껅 껆 껇 껈 껉 껊 껋 껌 껍 껎 껏 껐 껑 껒 껓 껔 껕 껖 껗 께 껙 껚 껛 껜 껝 껞 껟 껠 껡 껢 껣 껤 껥 껦 껧 껨 껩 껪 껫 껬 껭 껮 껯 껰 껱 껲 껳 껴 껵 껶 껷 껸 껹 껺 껻 껼 껽 껾 꿀 꿁 꿂 꿃 꿄 꿅 꿆 꿇 꿈 꿉 꿊 꿋 꿌 꿍 꿎 꿏 꿐 꿑 꿒 꿓 꿔 꿕 꿖 꿗 꿘 꿙 꿚 꿛 꿜 꿝 꿞 꿟 꿠 꿡 꿢 꿣 꿤 꿥 꿦 꿧 꿨 꿩 꿪 꿫 꿬 꿭 꿮 꿯 꿰 꿱 꿲 꿳 꿴 꿵 꿶 꿷 꿸 꿹 꿺 꿻 꿼 꿽 꿾 꿿 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 a b c d e f g h i j k l m n o p q r s t u v w x y z

languages in this way, make sure you don't leave players whose characters can't participate bored for too long.

Scripts are essentially independent of language. Just as different real-world languages use the same script to transcribe their different words, Common could be written in Davek or Rellenic as easily as in the Common script. Adventurers might run across old dwarf texts in Davek runes that use Common words—or the Abyssal language. Such a text would require familiarity with two languages to decipher.

The six basic scripts noted above might not be the only scripts ever used in your world. You might decide that an ancient empire had its own script, one that none of the adventurers are familiar with. This would work like a cryptogram puzzle, forcing the players to figure out what runes or characters represent which letters in the “Common” script.

Words of Power

The Supernal and Abyssal languages are both actual languages used to communicate, but they also include words of power—words whose syllables contain the raw magic of creation (in the case of Supernal) or primordial evil (Abyssal). Player characters can't know these languages initially. They might eventually learn the basics of communicating in these tongues, but without mastering these mighty sounds. Mortals who learn Supernal don't gain the ability to have their words universally understood, but they do learn to read the Supernal language and to understand immortals speaking in that language, even if the immortals have not chosen to make themselves understood to all listeners. Texts containing these words in either language could unleash powerful effects—and these tomes or scrolls might be relics in their own right.

THE NENTIR VALE

Up until four centuries or so ago, the Moon Hills and the surrounding Nentir Vale were thinly settled borderlands, home to quarrelsome human hill-chieftains and remote realms of nonhumans such as dwarves and elves. Giants, minotaurs, orcs, ogres, and goblins plagued the area. Ruins such as those on the Gray Downs or the ring-forts atop the Old Hills date back to these days, as do stories of the hero Vendar and the dragon of the Nentir.

With the rise of the empire of Nerath to the south, human settlers began to move up the Nentir, establishing towns such as Fastormel, Harkenwold, and Winterhaven. A Nerathan hero named Aranda Markelhay obtained a charter to build a keep at the portage of the Nentir Falls. She raised a simple tower at the site of Moonstone Keep three hundred ten years ago, and under its protection the town of Fallcrest began to grow.

Over the next two centuries, Fallcrest grew into a small and prosperous city. It was a natural crossroads for trade, and the Markelhays ruled it well. When the empire of Nerath began to crumble about a century ago, Fallcrest continued to flourish—for a time. Ninety years ago, a fierce horde of orcs known as the Bloodspears descended from the Stonemarch and swept over the vale. Fallcrest's army was defeated in a rash attempt to halt the Bloodspears out on Gardbury Downs. The Bloodspears burned and pillaged Fallcrest and went on to wreak havoc all across the Nentir Vale.

In the decades since the Bloodspear War, Fallcrest has struggled to reestablish itself. The town is a shadow of the former city; little trade passes up and down the river these days. The countryside for scores of miles around is dotted with abandoned homesteads and manors from the days of Nerath. Once again the Nentir Vale is a thinly settled borderland where few folk live. This is a place in need of a few heroes.

Using the Nentir Vale

The Nentir Vale is part of the default DUNGEONS & DRAGONS game world, built on the assumptions outlined at the start of this chapter. It's the setting for the adventures included in this box and the *Monster Vault*, and you'll find references to its sites in other published DUNGEONS & DRAGONS adventures, sourcebooks, and novels. You can use the Nentir Vale exactly as it's presented here, borrow elements from it to develop a setting for your own campaign, or ignore it entirely in favor of your own ideas.

In addition to providing the setting for a number of published adventures, the Nentir Vale is also ripe with adventure opportunities that you can design yourself. In this section, you'll find a wealth of information about the town of Fallcrest so you can use it as a home base for your player characters and perhaps the scene of some town-based adventures. You'll also find descriptions of many regions and sites around the Nentir Vale, including a number of potential adventure locations, from the Sword Barrow to the Temple of Yellow Skulls. Use these

descriptions to spur your own imagination as you create new adventures for your characters to explore.

Around the Nentir Vale

Fallcrest lies near the middle of the broad borderland region known as the Nentir Vale. The vale is now mostly empty, with a handful of living villages and towns scattered over this wide area. Abandoned farmsteads, ruined manors, and broken keeps litter the countryside. Bandits, wild animals, and monsters roam freely throughout the vale, threatening anyone who fares more than a few miles away from one of the surviving settlements. Travel along the roads or river is usually safe—usually. But every now and then, travelers come to bad ends between towns.

The Nentir Vale is a northern land, but it sees relatively little snow—winters are windy and bitterly cold. The Nentir River is too big to freeze except for a few weeks in the coldest part of the year. Summers are cool and mild.

The “clear” parts of the map are covered in mixed terrain—large stretches of open meadowland, copses of light forest, gently rolling hills, and the occasional thicket of dense woodland and heavy undergrowth. The downs marked on the map are hilly grassland, with little tree cover. The hills are steeper and more rugged, and include light forest in the valleys and saddles between the hilltops.

Interesting locales in the Nentir Vale are described below.

Cairngorm Peaks This small mountain range provides a sheltering barrier between the Nentir Vale and the savage monsters of the Stonemarch. Kobolds and goblins infest the eastern part of the mountains, enjoying the same protection from the more terrible monsters of the western reaches.

Winterhaven

Built in the shelter of the Keep on the Shadowfell during Nerath’s height, this village stands as a feeble light at the edge of civilization.

Population: 950. Most villagers are farmers and herders who live outside the walls, and most are human.

Government: Ernest Padraig, the Lord of Winterhaven, is descended from the noble family that ruled the area under edict of the old empire.

Defense: The Winterhaven Regulars are a core group of ten soldiers who perform guard and police functions in and around the village. Padraig can muster a force of about fifty civilians, given a day’s notice, to supplement this tiny force if the village is threatened.

Inn and Tavern: Wrafton’s Inn serves as the public house for the region.

Supplies: Bairwin’s Grand Shoppe, market square.

Temple: Sister Linora offers sacrifices to the entire pantheon when called on to do so, but she is a devotee of Avandra and most villagers offer their prayers to the god of luck.

Winterhaven: Hard under the Cairngorms at the west end of the Nentir Vale lies the remote village of Winterhaven, surrounded by a few miles of farmland and pastures.

Keep on the Shadowfell: Long ago, soldiers from Nerath built a strong fortress over a rift leading to the Shadowfell, hoping to prevent shadowy horrors from entering the world. The old keep lies in ruins now, and a new generation of cultists has secretly taken up residence here. They seek to undo the magical wards sealing the Shadowfell rift.

The Miser's Pit: A mad dwarf named Goldrun Coinkeeper discovered this deep shaft hidden in the Cairngorm Peaks. A narrow stair at the edge of the shaft descends at least 500 feet through the earth, leading eventually into the vast expanse of the Underdark—a terrible subterranean realm inhabited by powerful monsters, including the mysterious dark elves known as drow.

The Chaos Scar A long, wide valley between the Ogrefist Hills and the Witchlight Fens, the Chaos Scar is thought to have been carved by the fall of a massive meteor. The arrival of this fallen star was fraught with ill omen, and the place now seems a dark magnet for all that is evil, drawing horrific monsters and people of malign character to make their homes in the valley.

The Chaos Scar is not one adventure site, but hundreds—the sides of the valley are dotted with caves and ruins crawling with monstrous denizens. Adventures set in the Chaos Scar are readily available at DungeonsandDragons.com.

The Cloak Wood This small forest to the west of Fallcrest is infested with several tribes of kobolds—small, reptilian humanoids that live in maze-like warrens filled with deadly traps. At least one young dragon also lives in the forest, enjoying the adulation of the tiny pests.

Kobold Hall: The wreck now known locally as Kobold Hall was once the estate of a minor lord who came to Nentir Vale to establish his own demesne. Ruined during the Bloodspear War, the old castle has been abandoned for almost a century, and kobolds now lurk in its depths.

Dawnforge Mountains Named for the legendary mountain at the eastern edge of the world where Moradin is said to have crafted the sun, the Dawnforge Mountains define the eastern boundary of the Nentir Vale. Beyond the mountains, the land grows quickly wilder, for only a few settlements were ever established that far from Nerath's capital, and even fewer have lasted to the present day. The foothills to the east of the mountains are infested with goblins and orcs, making trade with those remaining towns dangerous and difficult.



Hammerfast: A dwarven hold cut from the rock of a deep vale in the Dawnforge Mountains, Hammerfast is the largest and wealthiest town in the region. The Trade Road runs through the citadel gates and continues eastward beyond the Dawnforge Mountains. The dwarves of Hammerfast look to their own first and don't give away anything for free, but they are honest and industrious.

Gardbury Downs The site of Fallcrest's failed attempt to hold back the Bloodspear orcs ninety years ago, Gardbury Downs is said to be haunted by the spirits of the fallen defenders of the Nentir Vale. Remains of that ancient battle litter the Downs—broken swords, shattered armor, and old bones. Travelers on the King's Road rarely see any sign of ghosts, but the folk of Winterhaven know better than to wander out on the Downs at night. Orcs from the Stonemarch also appear in the Gardbury Downs from time to time, circling the Cairngorm Peaks to raid into the Nentir Vale.

Gardmore Abbey: This striking ruin is a large monastery that has lain in ruins for almost one hundred fifty years. The abbey was dedicated to Bahamut and served as the base of a militant order of paladins who won great fame fighting in Nerath's distant crusades. As the story goes, the paladins brought a dark artifact back from a far crusade for safekeeping, and evil forces gathered to assault the abbey and take it back. Extensive dungeons lie beneath the ruins, which might still conceal the hoarded wealth of the old crusading paladins.

Hammerfast

Hammerfast is a city where the living dwell among the dead. The buildings are converted tombs and sepulchers, cleared of rubble and refurbished to serve as homes and businesses.

Population: 12,000. Hammerfast's population consists mostly of dwarves.

Government: Three guilds—the trade guild, the lore guild, and the craft guild—rule Hammerfast. Each guild has two representatives on the city council, which elects the mayor. The current mayor is Marsinda Goldspinner, a representative of the trade guild.

Defense: A full-time force of about 200 warriors defends the city, manning thick, stone walls and a number of towers equipped with catapults and ballistae. In addition, outsiders are allowed only in the Gate Ward. The rest of the city is accessible only with permission from the guard.

Inns: The Arcane Star provides high quality but expensive accommodations. Rondal's Inn offers a cheaper, though shabbier, alternative.

Taverns: The Foundation Stone is the most popular tavern for travelers in town. It offers cheap food and drink, along with entertainment such as knife throwing tournaments and a popular local game called giant's feet.

Supplies: An open air market in Hammerfast's Gate Ward offers a wide variety of goods, though it is difficult to predict which caravans are in town at any given time. Boltac's Goods is a more reliable source of adventuring gear, but its owner is renowned for his greed.

Temples: The temple of Moradin, with the pool of fire that burns before it, is an important center of the faith in the Nentir Vale. The priests craft items at the Forge of Life all day and night. Hammerfast also has temples to Ioun and Pelor. However, all three temples are in the city's inner wards, rather than the open Gate Ward.

Gray Downs This desolate region was once the home of ancient human hill-clans who lived in the Vale centuries before civilized folk settled in Fallcrest. The hill-folk are long gone, but their grim barrows remain.

The Sword Barrow: This large burial mound stands near the middle of the Gray Downs. The Sword Barrow gained its name because scores of rusted blades of ancient design are buried around its edges, blades pointing inward; a visitor can turn up several in a few minutes of looking around. The blades seem completely ordinary, not hinting at the old warding magic that surrounds the place.

Harken Forest This large woodland stretches from the Nentir River to the mountains and extends for miles to the south. It separates the Nentir Vale from the more populous coastal towns of the south. A strong goblin keep called

Daggerburg lies somewhere in the southwest reaches, not too far from Kalton Manor; the goblins sometimes raid the river-traffic moving along the Nentir, or send small parties of marauders to Harkenwold's borders.

An elf tribe known as the Woodsinger Clan roams the eastern portions of the forest. They occasionally trade with the humans of Harkenwold and keep an eye on travelers along the old King's Road. They have a long-standing feud with the Daggerburg goblins, and the goblins keep to the western parts of the forest to avoid swift and deadly elven arrows. However, the goblins are growing more numerous and have become bolder in recent months.

Harkenwold: Half a dozen small villages lie along the upper vales of the White River. Together, they make up the Barony of Harkenwold—a tiny realm whose total population is not much greater than Fallcrest's. The people of Harkenwold are farmers, woodcutters, and woodworkers; little trade comes up or down the old King's Road.

The ruler of Harkenwold is Baron Stockmer, an elderly man who was known for his strong sword arm in his youth. He is a just and compassionate ruler.

Kalton Manor: Back in the days when Nerath was settling the Nentir Vale, minor lords in search of land to call their own established manors and holds throughout the area. Kalton Manor was one of these, a small keep raised by Lord Arrol Kalton about two hundred years ago. Lord Arrol intended to settle the lower vale of the White River, but it was not to be—monsters from the Witchlight Fens drove off the tenants Arrol had brought with him. At the end, Arrol and a handful of his servants and family lived alone in a half-finished keep slowly falling into ruin until they disappeared as well. Stories tell of treasure—the old Kalton fortune—hidden in secret chambers beneath the ruined keep.

Lake Nen The frigid waters of Lake Nen hide a mystery. On certain nights, fishers from Nenlast out too late on the lake hear singing—beautiful, ethereal music that fills them with longing. Some never return to their homes, others return forever changed, haunted by their experience. It is said that the boundaries between the world and the Feywild grow thin when the full moon's light dances on the water, and the music of the faerie court of the Prince of Thorns filters out over the lake.

Nenlast: This tiny human village lies at the east end of Lake Nen. The folk here make a meager living by trading smoked fish to the dwarves of Hammerfast. They also deal with the Tigerclaw barbarians of the Winterbole Forest. When the wild folk choose to trade, they come to Nenlast to barter their pelts and amber for good dwarven metalwork.

Ruins of Fastormel: Once a prosperous town on the shores of Lake Nen, Fastormel was destroyed by the Bloodspear orcs and has never been resettled. The town was ruled by a Lord Mage (the most powerful wizard in town claimed the ruler's scepter), and the Mistborn Tower of the last Lord Mage still stands amid the ruins of the town. The tower is shrouded in a strange silver mist that never dissipates, no matter what the weather would otherwise dictate.

Lake Wintermist Perpetually shrouded in icy fog, Lake Wintermist provides ample supplies of fish for the Tigerclaw barbarians of the Winterbole forest and a few homesteads along its southern shore. White dragons frequently appear in the northwestern part of the lake, particularly in the dead of winter when they seek out mates.

Moon Hills Arrayed to the south and east of Fallcrest, the Moon Hills are fairly tame. The area closest to the town is well patrolled by the Fallcrest Guard, but goblins and human bandits are fairly common beyond that area.

Ogrefist Hills These desolate hills are said to be accursed by an ancient evil. During Nerath's height, several minor lords tried in succession to establish manors in these hills, but none lasted more than a single year.

Temple of Yellow Skulls: Legend tells that a rakshasa prince summoned demons to this ancient shrine and bound them to his service by imprisoning their vital essences in gold-plated human skulls. None of these have yet been recovered from the ruins, but the story persists. Deep caverns beneath the ruins lead all the way down to the Underdark, and from time to time dangerous monsters of the deep places emerge here and prowl the nearby lands.

Old Hills Though the hills themselves are no older than any other geographical feature in the Vale, the Old Hills bear signs of the first human settlements in the region: ancient ring-forts built by the same hill-tribes that erected the barrows in the Gray Downs. The remains of these ancient forts appear across the entire length and breadth of the hills, from near Nenlast to Raven Roost and Fiveleague House, both of which were built atop old ruins.

Fiveleague House: Fiveleague House is more properly known as the Fiveleague Inn. It's a strongly built innhouse surrounded by a wooden palisade. Fiveleague House caters to travelers and merchants coming or going from Hammerfast, a day's journey (five leagues) farther east. The proprietor is a big, bearlike human named Barton. Barton makes a good show of joviality, but he's secretly allied with the bandits of Raven Roost and sends them word of travelers worth robbing who will be continuing west toward Fallcrest.

Raven Roost: This small keep stands at the southern end of the Old Hills. Once it was the seat of a small manor, but it fell into ruin long ago and has recently been taken over by a gang of bandits. The leaders of the bandits are a trio of shadar-kai named Samminel, Erzoun, and Geriesh. They secretly deal with Barton, the proprietor of Fiveleague House, giving him a cut of the take when he tips them off about wealthy travelers on the Trade Road.

Thunderspire: This striking peak is the largest of the Old Hills. Beneath Thunderspire lies the ancient minotaur city of Saruun Khel. The minotaur kingdom fell almost a hundred years before Fallcrest was established, when a struggle for succession led to a vicious civil war. In the upper halls of the minotaur city the mysterious order of wizards known as the Mages of Saruun have established a secretive stronghold called the Seven-Pillared Hall; merchants passing along the Trade Road sometimes take shelter here.

The Stonemarch A rugged land of stony hills and deep gorges cut by white-rushing rivers, the Stonemarch is home to tribes of dangerous humanoid and giants. Orcs, ogres, giants, and trolls haunt the farther reaches of these barren lands. Fortunately for the residents of the vale, the monsters rarely come east over the Cairngorm Peaks. A great orc-warren known as the Fanged Jaws of Kulkoszar lies in the northern part of the wasteland; here the chief of the Bloodspear tribe rules over hundreds of the fierce warriors.

Winterbole Forest The vast expanse of the Winterbole Forest defines the northern border of the Nentir Vale and the limit of Nerath's expansion at its height. The Tigerclaw barbarians, fierce humans who revere the primal spirit called the Hunter of Winter as their totem, were never brought under Nerath's sway, and remained uneasy neighbors of the empire at its height. They trade with the people of Nenlast at times, but in harsh winters they have also been known to attack the village and simply take the food and weapons they need.

Witchlight Fens At the confluence of the Nentir River and the White River, a great swamp stretches for miles. Savage lizardfolk hunt these fens, occasionally emerging from the swamp to skirmish with the Woodsinger elves of Harken Forest.

The Town of Fallcrest

Fallcrest stands amid the Moon Hills at the falls of the Nentir River. Here travelers and traders using the old King's Road that runs north and south, the dwarven Trade Road from the east, and the river all meet. The surrounding ridges shelter several small valleys where farmers and woodfolk live; few are more than six or seven miles from the town. In general the people outside Fallcrest's walls earn their living by farming or keeping livestock, and the people inside the walls are artisans, laborers, or merchants. People with no other prospects can make a hard

living as porters, carrying cargo from the Lower Quays to the Upper Quays (or vice versa).

Fallcrest imports finished goods from the larger cities downriver and ironwork from the dwarf town of Hammerfast, and exports timber, leather, fruit, and grain. It also trades with the nearby town of Winterhaven. The surrounding hills hold several marble quarries that once produced a good deal of stone, but the area has little demand for ornamental stone these days, and only a few stonecutters still practice their trade.

Fallcrest

A small town built from the ruins of a larger city, Fallcrest is the crossroads of the Nentir Vale.

Population: 1,350; another 900 or so live in the countryside within a few miles of the town. The people of Fallcrest are mostly humans, halflings, and dwarves. No dragonborn are permanent residents, but travelers of all races pass through on occasion.

Government: The human noble Faren Markelhay is the Lord Warden (hereditary lord) of the town. He is in charge of the town's justice, defense, and laws. The Lord Warden appoints a town council to look after routine commerce and public projects.

Defense: The Fallcrest Guard numbers sixty warriors, who also serve as constables. Moonstone Keep is their barracks. The Lord Warden can call up 350 militia at need.

Inns: Nentir Inn; Silver Unicorn. The Silver Unicorn is pricier and offers better service; the Nentir Inn sees a more interesting clientele.

Taverns: Blue Moon Alehouse; Lucky Gnome Taphouse; Nentir Inn taproom.

Supplies: Halfmoon Trading House; Sandercot Provisioners.

Temples: Temple of Erathis (Erathis, Ioun, Moradin); Moonsong Temple (Sehanine, Corellon, Avandra, Melora); House of the Sun (Pelor, Kord, Bahamut).

Location Key

Fallcrest is divided into two districts by a steep bluff that cuts across the town. The area north of the bluff is known locally as Hightown. This district survived the city's fall in relatively good shape, and it was the first area resettled. To the south of the bluff lies Lowtown, which tends to be newer and poorer. In the event of a serious threat, people retreat up to Hightown—the bluff and the town walls completely ring this part of Fallcrest, making it highly defensible.

1. Tower of Waiting This old fortification was built on a small island in the Nentir to guard the city from any waterborne attack from the north. It fell into

ruin even before the sack of the old city, and now is little more than an empty shell overrun by mice and birds.

2. Upper Quays Boats proceeding down the Nentir must stop here and offload their cargo, which is then portaged through the town to the Lower Quays and loaded onto boats below the falls. Likewise, cargo heading in the other direction is carried up to these quays and loaded aboard boats bound upstream.

3. Five-Arch Bridge Dwarf artisans from Hammerfast built a fine stone bridge over the Nentir two hundred years ago. Although the bridge was destroyed when Fallcrest fell, the great stone piers supporting it remained intact, so a few years back the people of the town laid a new timber trestle over the old stone footings.

A small toll house guards the western side of the bridge. Five Fallcrest guards under the command of Sergeant Thurmina watch this post. They collect a toll of 1 cp per head (and 1 sp per mount) making use of the bridge in either direction. Thurmina is a gruff woman who has been known to turn a blind eye to odd cargo moving over the bridge when paid to do so.

The river current begins to pick up on the south side of the bridge. Boats (or swimmers) venturing far from the banks are in danger of being carried over the falls.

4. Nentir Inn A fine new building constructed of fieldstone and strong timber, the Nentir Inn stands on the west bank of the river. Merchants from Winterhaven or Hammerfast make up the clientele, along with travelers who happen to be passing through. A good room with two single beds goes for 5 sp per night. The Nentir Inn also boasts a lively taproom, which is popular with the folk who live in the vales on the west bank of the river.

The proprietor is a charming half-elf named Erandil Zemoar who showed up in Fallcrest one day about two years ago, bought land, and built an inn. The money that Erandil used to set up the Nentir isn't his; he charmed an aging noblewoman in the far south out of her fortune, and fled one step ahead of the authorities.

5. Knight's Gate Fallcrest's northern city gate is known as Knight's Gate, because the Lord Warden's riders normally come and go from the city by this road. The gate consists of strong outer doors of iron-reinforced timber and an inner portcullis between a pair of small stone towers. The portcullis is normally lowered at sunset, and the gates close only in times of danger.

6. Silver Unicorn Inn For many years, the Silver Unicorn has billed itself as "the Pride of Fallcrest," charging high rates for its attentive service and well-appointed rooms. The recent opening of the Nentir Inn put a big dent in the Silver Unicorn's business, and the owner, a stern halfling matriarch named

Wisara Osterman, strongly disapproves. She's certain that there is something shifty about Erandil Zemoar, but can't put her finger on it.

A room in the Silver Unicorn costs 2 gp per night.

7. Halfmoon Trading House The Halfmoon family is a large, far-flung clan of halflings who keep small trading posts in several settlements throughout the Nentir Vale. This is the largest and most important of those establishments. It's under the care of Selarund Halfmoon, a friendly halfling who dispenses a never-ending stream of advice to his customers, such as, "It never rains but as someone gets wet!" or "A nail ain't afraid of a hammer with no handle!" No one knows what he's talking about most of the time, but Selarund is more sly than he lets on and keeps a close eye on events all around the town.

The Halfmoon Trading House is an excellent place to buy mundane tools, gear, supplies, or clothing.

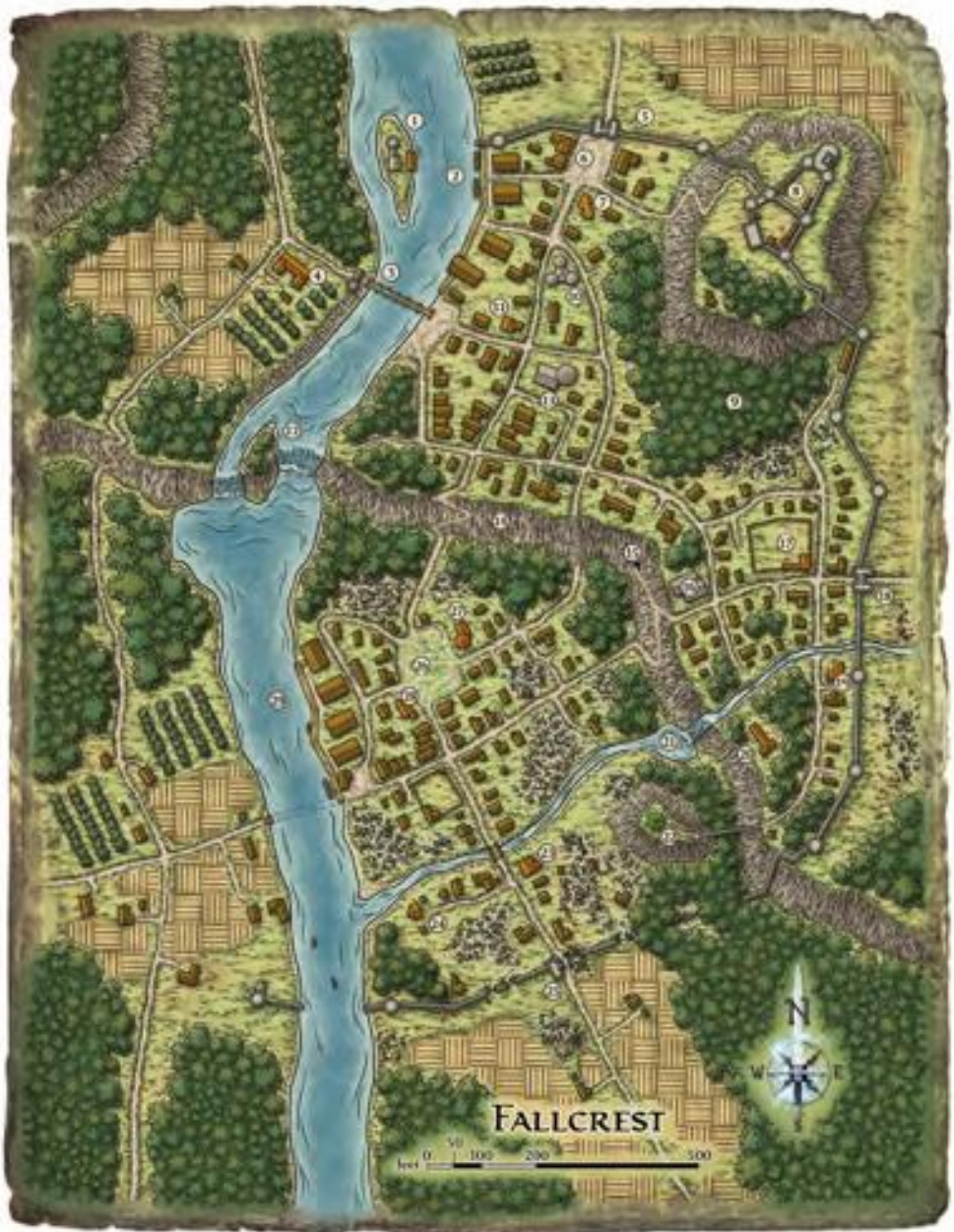
8. Moonstone Keep The seat of Lord Warden Faren Markelhay, Moonstone Keep is an old castle that sits atop a steep-sided hill overlooking the town. The outer bailey includes barracks housing up to sixty Fallcrest guards. At any given time about twenty or so are off-duty. Other buildings in the courtyard include a stable, an armory, a chapel, a smithy, and several storehouses. The keep is the large D-shaped building at the north end of the castle.

Faren Markelhay is a balding, middle-aged human with a keen mind and a dry wit. He is a busy man and sees to local matters personally, so adventurers calling on him are likely to wait a long time for a short interview. However, he is eager for news of other towns in the Vale (and farther lands as well) and never turns away someone who brings him news or waits to see him.

9. The Tombwood Along the southern slopes of Moonstone Hill grows a large thicket that has never been entirely cleared. Within its tangled paths lies the old castle cemetery (now heavily overgrown), as well as a battle-mound dating back centuries.

10. House of the Sun When Fallcrest was a larger city, it supported several good-sized temples located in the Hightown districts. With the town's depopulation, several of these were abandoned, including the House of the Sun, a temple dedicated to Pelor. The place also includes shrines to Kord and Bahamut. Recently, a zealous dwarf priest of Pelor named Grundelmar came to Fallcrest from Hammerfast and reestablished this old temple. Grundelmar is loud and opinionated, a real fire-breather who goes on and on about smiting evil wherever it might lurk.

11. House Azaer A small, well-off trading company, House Azaer is owned by the tieflings of the Azaer family. They import goods (including arms and armor) from Hammerfast, Harkenwold, and the lands to the south, and organize caravans up to Winterhaven several times a year. House Azaer is an excellent place to purchase nearly any mundane equipment, although its prices are a little on the high side.



Amara Azaer is in charge of the house business in Fallcrest, and spends her time on the premises. Though young, the tiefling is quite sharp and doesn't miss an opportunity for profit in running the Azaer business.

12. The Nentir Falls Here the Nentir River descends nearly 200 feet in three striking shelflike drops. On the small island in the middle of the falls stands the statue of an ancient human hero named Vendar, holding up his hand as if to challenge enemies approaching from downriver. Local legend tells that Vendar slew a dragon whose lair was hidden in caverns beneath the falls.

13. Temple of Erathis This large, impressive stone temple is finished with Fallcrest's native marble. Its chapel is a large rotunda with a 30-foot-tall dome. The temple of Erathis is the largest and most influential temple in town. The place also includes shrines to Ioun and Moradin.

High Priest Dirina Mornbrow oversees two lesser priests and several acolytes—townsfolk who spend part of their day tending the temple. Dirina is a woman of about sixty who is convinced of the superiority of Erathis's dogma, and disappointed that more people in Fallcrest don't pay proper reverence to "our city's patron god."

14. The Bluffs Fallcrest is divided in half by a great cliff snaking northwest to southeast across the town. The bluffs average 150 to 250 feet in height. They are not strictly vertical, but are too tall and steep to be easily climbed. Someone leaping (or pushed) off the upper edge would fall and roll about $2d6 \times 10$ feet before sliding to a stop, likely on a precarious ledge.

15. The Catacombs The limestone bluffs between Hightown and Lowtown hold a number of caves, which the folk of Fallcrest have used as burial crypts for centuries. As caves fill up, they are walled off and forgotten about. Naturally, stories abound in town about treasure hoards hidden away in the crypts, and the restless undead that guard them.

16. Moonsong Temple The third of Fallcrest's temples is devoted to Sehanine. It also includes shrines to Corellon, Melora, and Avandra. The Markelhays regard Sehanine as their special patron, and over the years they have given generously to the temple. The temple occupies a commanding position atop the bluffs, and its white minarets can be seen from any corner of Lowtown.

The leader of the temple is High Priest Ressimae Starlight, a wise and compassionate elf who finished adventuring decades ago and retired to a contemplative life. He is a musician of great skill who happily tutors the local children, even those who are poor and can't afford to pay for their lessons.

17. Fallcrest Stables Lannar Thistleton owns this business, providing travelers with tack, harness, stabling, shoeing, wagons, and just about anything dealing with horses, mules, or ponies. He keeps a larger corral about a mile outside of town, and at any given time Lannar has several riding horses, draft horses, or mules in his paddock near Wizard's Gate. The halfling is an excellent source of rumors, since he sees the travelers coming or going by the roads. He is

a friendly fellow of about forty, with a large brood of children at his home out in the countryside.

18. Wizard's Gate Fallcrest's eastern city gate is known as Wizard's Gate, because it's the gate most convenient to the Septarch's Tower. The road to the east travels a few miles into the surrounding hills, linking a number of outlying farms and homesteads with the town.

The gate resembles Knight's Gate in construction, and is similarly watched by a detachment of five guards and a sergeant. The leader of this detachment is Sergeant Murgeddin, a dwarf veteran who fought in the Bloodspear War and was present at the Battle of Gardbury, where Fallcrest's army was defeated. A friendly drink goes a long way toward loosening Murgeddin's tongue about that long-ago war.

19. Naerumar's Imports Considered the finest of Fallcrest's retail establishments, Naerumar's Imports deals in gemstones, jewelry, art, and magic trinkets. The owner is Orest Naerumar, a tiefling who displays impeccable manners and discretion. Orest corresponds with relatives and colleagues in several towns and cities outside the Nentir Vale; given a few weeks, he can order in low-level magic items or other items of unusual value. Similarly, Orest purchases interesting items such as these, since other dealers in distant towns or cities might be looking for them.

Orest doesn't ask questions about where adventurers found the goods they're selling to him, but he is not a fence—if he knows that something was obtained illegally, he declines to purchase it.

20. Kamroth Estate This is the home of the self-styled "lord" Armos Kamroth, a wealthy landowner who collects rents from scores of farmers and herders living in the countryside nearby. Armos is a brusque, balding man of about fifty who makes a show of loaning money in good faith and exacting only what the law allows—but somehow he has quietly bought up dozens of free farms over the years and turned their owners into his tenants.

Armos is a miser of the worst kind and is secretly a devotee of Tiamat. He leads a small circle of like-minded folk who meet secretly in hidden vaults beneath his comfortable estate. Any news of treasure discovered by itinerant heroes inflames his avarice and leads him to begin scheming for ways to part the adventurers from their wealth.

21. Moonwash Falls A small, swift stream known as the Moonwash flows through Fallcrest to meet the Nentir River. The stream is rarely more than 20 feet wide or 5 feet deep. The town's children love to play in the pool at the base of the falls in the summertime.

22. Septarch's Tower This lonely structure is a tall, seven-sided spire of pale green stone that doesn't match anything else in the town. In the days before the Bloodspear War, this was the seat of Fallcrest's mages' guild—an order of a dozen or so wizards and arcane scholars. Defensive enchantments prevented the orcs from sacking the tower, but the guild's members died fighting for the city or fled to safer lands.

The tower is now the property of Nimozaran the Green, an elderly wizard who was once apprenticed to the last of the old guild mages. Nimozaran considers himself the “High Septarch of Fallcrest” and master of the guild, whose membership now includes only himself and a rather unpromising male halfling apprentice named Tobolar Quickfoot. Nimozaran expects any potential new guild members to pay a hefty initiation fee, and so far none of the few other arcanists living in or passing through Fallcrest have seen reason to join.

23. Blue Moon Alehouse This brewhouse on the banks of the Moonwash Stream is the best tavern in Fallcrest. The owner is a nervous, easily flustered fellow of fifty or so named Par Winnomer. The true genius behind the Blue Moon is the halfling brewmaster Kemara Brownbottle. She is happy to let Par fret about running the taphouse, while she spends her time perfecting her selection of ales and beers.

The Blue Moon is popular with halfling traders whose boats tie up along the Lower Quay, well-off town merchants, and the farmers who live in the countryside south of Fallcrest. The old dwarves Teldorthan (area 24) and Sergeant Murgeddin (area 18) hoist a tankard or two here on frequent occasion, and both can provide beginning adventurers with good leads on potential adventures.

24. Teldorthan's Arms The dwarf Teldorthan Ironhews is the town's weaponsmith and armorer. He is a garrulous old fellow who spends his time trading stories with his customers with a pipe clenched in his teeth, while his apprentices (two of whom are his sons) do the work. Make no mistake—Teldorthan is a master armorer, and under his supervision his apprentices turn out work of exceptional quality.

Teldorthan has in stock (or can soon manufacture) just about any mundane weapon or armor, although he advises beginners to try a hammer: “If you can drive a nail, you can kill an orc! You can drive a nail, can't you?”

25. King's Gate Fallcrest's southern gate was destroyed in the attack that devastated the city long ago, and it still has not been entirely rebuilt. One of the two paired towers is nothing but rubble, and several large gaps remain in the town walls south of the bluffs through which anyone could enter the city.

Despite its lack of functionality, the King's Gate is still used as a guardpost by the Fallcrest guards. Sergeant Gerdrand is in charge here; he is a tall, lanky man who doesn't say much, answering questions with a grunt or a shake of the head.

26. The Market Green The majority of Fallcrest's folk live above the bluffs in Hightown and walk down to do business on the streets of Lowtown, which bustle with commerce. This wide square is an open, grassy meadow where Fallcrest's merchants and visiting traders do business in good weather. The town's children gather here for games of tag or kick-stones.

27. Sandercot Provisioners The largest general store in Fallcrest, Sandercot's deals in just about anything—food, clothing, stores, rope, tools, gear, leather goods, and more. Compared to the Halfmoon Trading House, Sandercot's has slightly cheaper prices but goods of somewhat lower quality.

The owner is Nimena Sandercot, the widow of the late and unlamented Marken Sandercot. Marken associated with brigands and ne'er-do-wells, making a tidy sum by buying up goods stolen from his neighbors. His widow has continued the practice. Nimena puts on an air of rustic charm, but when it's time to talk "backroom business" she is ruthless, grasping, and greedy. She has three young sons, all of whom are quickly learning the family business.

Nimena is a willing fence for anything someone cares to sell, but she won't pay a copper more than she has to.

28. Lucky Gnome Taphouse The Lucky Gnome is widely regarded as the cheapest and coarsest of Fallcrest's drinking establishments. It caters to the porters and laborers who work the nearby docks, and fistfights are a nightly occurrence.

The owner of the Lucky Gnome is an unsavory character named Kelson. Kelson runs the River Rats, a small street gang that plagues Lowtown, from the back room of his tavern.

29. Lower Quays Keelboats and similar craft put in here to unload their cargo and portage it up to other boats above the falls. As described above for the Upper Quays, the porters' guild jealously defends its monopoly on moving cargo around the falls, and it frequently attempts to intimidate local merchants into paying for portage services—whether needed or not. In addition to the porters' guild, another gang of troublemakers lurks around the Lower Quays: the River Rats. These street toughs and thieves look out for the chance to pilfer from the warehouses or roll a drunk in a dark alleyway.

Boats belonging to a number of different travelers tie up here, the most common of which are the keelboats of the halfling Swiftwater Clan. The Swiftwaters carry cargo all the way down to the Nentir's mouth, hundreds of miles downriver. They're more than willing to take passengers for a small fee. Irena Swiftwater is the matriarch of the clan. She is a sharp merchant who passes herself off as an absent-minded reader of fortunes and maker of minor charms.



RUNNING THE GAME

A competitive sport has referees. It needs them. Someone impartial involved in the game needs to make sure everyone's playing by the rules.

The role of the Dungeon Master has a little in common with that of a referee. If you imagined that all the monsters in an encounter were controlled by one person and all the adventurers by another person, they might need a referee to make sure that both sides were playing by the rules and to resolve disputes. The DUNGEONS & DRAGONS game isn't a head-to-head competition in that way; the DM acts simultaneously as the person controlling all the monsters and as the referee.

Being a referee means that the DM stands as a mediator between the rules and the players. A player tells the DM what he or she wants to do, and the DM responds by telling the player what kind of check to make and mentally setting the target number. For example, if a player tells the DM that he wants his character to swing his greataxe at an orc, the DM says, "Make an attack roll," while looking up the orc's Armor Class.

That's such a simple example that most players take it for

granted and don't wait for the DM to ask for the attack roll. But if the player tells you that he wants his character to knock over a brazier full of hot coals into the orc's face, you (as the DM) have to make some snap judgments. How hard is it to knock over the heavy metal brazier? "Make a Strength check," you might respond, while mentally setting the DC at 15. If the Strength check is successful, you have to figure out how a face full of hot coals affects the orc, and might decide that the orc takes 1d6 fire damage and then a -2 penalty to attack rolls for a round.

Sometimes this role mediating the rules means that a DM has to enforce the rules on the players. If a player tells you, "I want to charge up here and attack the orc," you might have to say, "No, you can't charge to there; it's too far." Then the player takes this new information and comes up with a different plan.

Being the DM doesn't mean you have to know all the rules, though. If a player tries something you don't know how to adjudicate, ask the opinion of the players as a group. Doing so might take a few minutes, but it's usually possible to hash out an answer that seems fair.

Some DMs fear that asking their players' opinions will undermine their authority and give rise to claims that they are being unfair. On the contrary, most players like it when the DM asks their opinions, and they're more likely to feel that the results are fair when they can give their opinions.

*The DM is like a referee . . .
a mediator between the rules
and the players.*

MODES OF THE GAME

Over the course of a session of a DUNGEONS & DRAGONS game, the game shifts in and out of five basic modes: setup, exploration, conversation, encounter, and passing time. The five modes represent five different kinds of activities the characters engage in during their adventures.

Part of the job of running the game as DM is figuring out what mode the game is in, based on what the player characters are doing. The shifts are generally smooth and organic, and you might not even notice the change from one to another unless you're paying attention.

Your role as DM and the way you interact with the players are different depending on which mode the game is in. You provide the scene, describe and play the monsters, and dispense any information the adventurers need or gain. You determine the group's success or failure based on the players' choices, the difficulty of the situation, and the luck of the dice.

Setup The game is in setup mode when you're telling the players what they need to know about an adventure and when they're preparing for the first encounter of a game session. The characters might be buying supplies or working out plans. You might be reading an introductory paragraph about the adventure, perhaps summarizing events that have brought them to where they stand.

Setup can evolve into conversation, particularly if the players have questions about the quest they're beginning. For example, they might want to ask more about the bandits who have been raiding merchant caravans.

Setup also naturally evolves into exploration. If you give the players a summary of events that have brought them to the entrance of a dungeon, your next words might be "What do you do?" That question is a hallmark of the beginning of exploration mode.

Exploration In exploration mode, the characters move through the adventure setting, making decisions about their course and perhaps searching for traps, treasure, or clues. A lot of the game is in exploration mode. It's what usually fills the space between encounters and usually ends when an encounter begins.

Follow these steps to run the game in exploration mode.

- 1. Describe the environment.** Outline the options available to the characters by telling them where they are and what's around them. When you detail a dungeon room that the adventurers are in, mention all the doors, chests, and other things that they might want to interact with. Don't limit the adventurer's action by explicitly outlining options. Don't say, "You can either go through the door or search the chest," just describe the room and let the players decide what to do.
- 2. Listen.** Once you're done describing the area, the players tell you what their characters want to do. Some groups might need prompting. Ask them,

“What do you do?” Your job here is to listen to what the players want to do and identify how to resolve their actions. You should ask for more information if you need it.

Sometimes the players give you a group answer: “We go through the door.” Other times, individual players want to do specific things, such as searching a chest. The players don’t need to take turns, but you need to make sure to listen to every player and resolve everyone’s actions.

Some tasks involve a skill check or an ability check, such as a Thievery check to pick the lock on a chest, a Strength check to force open a door, or a Perception check to find hidden clues. Characters can perform other tasks without a check at all: move a lever, stand near the entrance to watch for danger, or walk down the left fork of a passage.

- 3. Narrate the results of the characters’ actions.** Describing the results often leads to another decision point. “Behind the door is a passage stretching off to the left and right” gives the characters an immediate decision point. “The sloping hall leads hundreds of feet down into the earth before finally ending in a door” sets up a decision point after some time. Whenever you reach another decision point, you’re back to step 1.

A character’s actions can also lead right into an encounter. “When you look down the well, a gigantic tentacle snakes up from its depths toward you!” might lead straight to a combat encounter. “When you move the lever, a block of stone slams down across the entrance. With a horrible grinding sound, the walls begin to move slowly inward.” That description might lead to a skill challenge.

Conversation In conversation, the adventurers are exploring the information inside someone’s head, rather than exploring a dungeon room. It’s not an encounter, with specific goals and a real chance of failure. The adventurers simply ask questions, and the NPC responds. Sometimes a check is involved—usually Bluff, Diplomacy, Intimidate, Insight, or Perception. Often the characters trade questions and answers until they have the information they need to make a decision and carry it out.

Conversation mode ends in one of two ways: Either the conversation ends and the adventurers move on their way, lapsing back into exploration mode, or the conversation escalates into a skill challenge or combat encounter.

Encounter Encounters are the most exciting part of the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS game. They have tension and urgency about them and a chance of failure. They involve tactical thinking and rolling dice, and are where most of the rules of the game come into play.

Passing Time The game has a rhythm and flow, and the action in the game is interspersed with lulls. These lulls are like the places where a movie fades to black and comes up again with the understanding that some time has

passed. Rarely give these situations any more time than movies do. When a rest period passes uneventfully, tell the players that fact and then move on. For example, don't make the players spend time discussing what the characters cook for dinner, unless the players enjoy that sort of detail. Gloss over mundane, unexciting details and get back to the heroic action as quickly as possible.

NARRATION

Just like the narrator of a novel, a play, or a movie, you serve the essential function of telling the players what is going on in the game world. The game relies on your descriptions and players' imaginations to set the scene. Using a few time-honored techniques of effective narration helps paint a vivid picture in each player's mind and bring the game to life.

When you roleplay and narrate with enthusiasm, you add energy to the game and draw the players out. Encourage them to follow your lead and to describe their actions in the same vivid way. Then incorporate their narration into your accounts of their successes and failures.

Brevity

Don't describe everything. Most players' eyes start to glaze over after about two sentences of descriptive text. Give just enough information to excite and inform the players, then let them react or ask for specific details.

- ◆ **Don't overdescribe.** Anything you describe in intricate detail sounds important, and players sometimes waste a lot of time trying to figure out why insignificant things matter.
- ◆ **Don't omit important details.** Make sure the players know about important terrain features before the fighting starts—if their characters can see or perceive them.
- ◆ **Don't give only the most important information all the time.** If you do that, you encourage metagame thinking. The players quickly realize that anything you take the time to describe must be important. Remain brief, but add touches of atmosphere and enticement in your narration.

Atmosphere

Describe a setting's features and sensory impressions: emotional overtones, lighting, temperature, texture, and odor. A rich environment has plenty of innocuous but interesting sensations that alert explorers pick up on. Little details are important, such as a lingering smell of ash or tiny beetles scurrying along the dungeon floor. Small anomalies—a tiny flower blossoming in the otherwise desolate and gloomy graveyard—help establish the overall atmosphere of a place.

Cinematic Style

It's a cliché, but it's also an important rule of narration: "Show, don't tell." Imagine how the environment would look and sound in a good movie, do your best to describe it that way, then add details of smells and texture that a movie can't communicate. Don't tell the players that there's a pool of bubbling acid nearby, show it to them with a vivid description. Think about how acid might smell, talk about a cloud of noxious vapor hovering above the pool, and describe what the pool bubbling sounds like.

Your Only Limit Is Your Imagination: Your imagination is the only boundary in your description. You aren't limited by a special effects budget. Describe amazing vistas, terrifying monsters, dastardly villains, and bone-crunching fight scenes. Your enthusiasm and liveliness are contagious, and they energize the whole game.

Portraying Rules Situations: It's easy to fall into the rut of describing events merely in terms of the applicable rules. Although it's important that the players understand what's going on in such terms, the *DUNGEONS & DRAGONS* game can be at its dullest if everyone talks in "game-speak." You know you've fallen into this trap when the table chatter is: "That's 26 against AC," "You hit, now roll damage," "31 points," and "Now we're to initiative count 13."

Instead, use such statistics, along with your knowledge of the scene, to help your narration. If 26 is barely a hit, but the 31 points of damage is a bad wound for the enemy, say: "You swing wildly, and the dragonborn brings his shield up just a second too late. Arrgh! Your blade catches him along the jaw, drawing a deep gash. He staggers!"



Enticement

Your narration helps players find the fun, enticing them to explore details of the environment that lead to encounters or important information. Anything you describe with extra, subtle details draws the players' attention. Give them just enough to invite further exploration, but don't describe the equivalent of a flashing neon sign reading, "This way to adventure!"

If the players come to a decision point where the options seem indistinguishable, you can use little sensory details to distinguish the options. Should the adventurers take the left fork or the right? Perhaps the left fork smells of ash, while the faint sound of lapping water emerges from the right. Unless the players know they're specifically looking for fire or water, these details don't steer them, but they make the choice of one option over the other seem less arbitrary.

Realism

Your narration of the fantastic world of the game needs to seem real—not as a simulation of the real world, but as if the game world were a real place with coherent, logical rules. Actions should have logical consequences, and the things the adventurers do should have an impact on the world. The people and creatures of the world should behave with consistency in ways that players can understand.

Sometimes realism is a matter of very small details. If two wooden doors appear to be exactly the same, but one requires a DC 16 Strength check to break through and the other one requires a DC 26 check, the world feels arbitrary and inconsistent. It's fine for one door to be harder to break down, but your description should give cues about why one door is so much sturdier than the other, whether it has adamantine reinforcements or a noticeable aura of magic sealing it shut. That makes the game world seem realistic.

Roleplaying

You don't just set the scene for adventure, you also take on the roles of villains, monsters, and other people and creatures that the adventurers encounter in their travels. Putting a little effort into portraying these people and creatures has a big payoff in fun.

Portraying Monsters: When a monster is involved, it's usually easy for the players to imagine its actions, especially when you're using representative tokens or miniatures and the creature is a simple beast. Appropriate sounds and vocalizations are entertaining, as are descriptions of how a monster reacts to the environment and the adventurers' actions. For example, a wolf snarls at its enemy, savages a downed foe, and whimpers when wounded. If your wolves (even your dire wolves) do that, your game comes alive.

Portraying NPCs: Nonplayer characters, including humanoids and magical beasts, are people of some sort. They have abilities and quirks that make them

unique and memorable to the players. Use these to help you roleplay. Consider how the NPC's intelligence, goals, and quirks play into the scene at hand. Don't be afraid to act in character and even use a unique voice for the NPC. Keep track of the way you have important NPCs act so you can maintain consistency if the same character appears again. The "Cast of Characters" section (page 183) of Chapter 5 helps you determine some aspects of important NPCs.

Even when an NPC isn't very detailed, use the racial or monster description to help you along. For instance, orcs that shout fearsome battle cries and that roar and hurl insults in battle are more fun to fight than those who act like silent axe-wielding bags of hit points.

Suspense

Part of the reason players keep coming back to the table is that they want to see what happens next. Will their characters succeed? How will they accomplish the great task set before them, and at what cost? That's suspense.

Suspense exists in the game when the players can see how they want things to turn out, but they don't know for sure how to make it happen. It's excitement mixed with a little bit of worry. When you use narration to create such dramatic tension, you keep players focused and excited about the game. Then they drive the game forward to see what's going to happen next.

Small Doses: During an encounter or a series of encounters, add small elements of uncertainty in your descriptions that lead to a payoff within a reasonable amount of time.

For example, the adventurers might notice a sickly sweet smell in the ancient tomb. When they encounter guardian mummies, the smell becomes overpowering—it's the odor of the spices and oils used to embalm the mummies.

When they smell the odor next, it sets them on edge, but here you throw them a curveball: They find embalmed but inanimate corpses in the next room, spicing up a scene of pure exploration. Just before the climactic encounter, the smell rises up again—wafting from under the door where the mummy lord awaits them. The players are rewarded if they remain cautious and prepare for a fight with a mummy.

Use a controlled hand about throwing too many curveballs like the harmless corpses. If you use such narrative tricks too often, you dilute the impact of the suspense you're trying to create. Also, make sure that your narrative details point to something useful within a reasonable amount of time. If the characters spend hours wondering what the smell is, they end up bewildered, not in a state of suspense.

Big Picture: Suspense builds as the players learn more about the adventure situation and what they have to do to accomplish their goals. With each bit of new information, the original situation takes on new facets. It might change

entirely when the players uncover a dramatic twist. The players and the characters have to adapt, maybe even change their goals as the truth unfolds. The unfolding of layered events and information builds suspense within an adventure or even within the whole story arc of a campaign.

DISPENSING INFORMATION

As Dungeon Master, one of your important tasks is figuring out exactly how much information to give to the players and when. Sometimes you just describe the scene, giving the players all the information. At other times, you tell the players only what their characters can detect using their skills and their knowledge. When you're creating an adventure, be sure to note the appropriate DCs for skill checks (page 107).

The Information Imperative

If there's information the adventurers absolutely must have in order to continue the adventure, give it to them. Don't make them have a chance to miss the information by failing a skill check or not talking to the right person or just not looking in the right place. The players should be able to uncover important information by using skills and investigation, but for crucial information, you need a foolproof method to get it into the players' hands. Tell them.

Passive Skill Checks

Passive skill checks are a great tool to help you know how much to tell the players about an object, situation, or scene right away. Without bringing the game to a halt by asking for skill checks, you can keep the momentum and suspense building. It's a great idea to use passive checks regularly, saving active checks (the checks that players request when they want to use skills actively) for when the characters want to learn more based on the cues you give them.

Make a List: To make using passive skill checks easy, keep a note of each character's passive skill check modifiers (10 + skill check bonus) for Perception and Insight. It's also a good idea to note the highest passive Perception in the group and either commit it to memory or keep it written down in a place that's easy to find.

Perception: Passive Perception checks help you set the scene. They tell you right away how much of the details of an encounter area the characters notice. Very alert characters can instantly pick up on significant details and hidden creatures or objects that would go unnoticed by others without a more thorough search.

- ◆ Make sure you give enough cues at lower Perception DCs to encourage the characters to make a more rigorous search of important features.
- ◆ Don't rely too heavily on passive Perception checks. Make sure you give the players the information they need to find the fun in your adventure, regardless of their characters' Perception modifiers.

Insight: Passive Insight checks provide information from social and emotional intuition and awareness that can serve a character in social encounters. You often use the result of a passive Insight check in social interactions as the DC for the Bluff check of a nonplayer character. (In other words, as an opposed check, Insight vs. Bluff.) If the NPC's Bluff check result is lower than any character's passive Insight check result, that character should get a sense that the NPC isn't being straightforward.

When you give the player this information, make sure to mention that the Insight skill is the reason behind the knowledge. This lets the player feel good about the choice to take training in Insight (if he has done so) and suggests that the player might want to make an active Insight check to learn more.



Informing Players

All the information the players need to make their choices comes from you. Therefore, within the rules of the game and the limits of their characters' knowledge, Insight, and Perception, tell players everything they need to know. You don't have to reveal all aspects of a situation or hazard in one go. You should, however, give enough information that the players know what's up and have an idea what to do—and what not to do.

“Gotcha!” Abilities: Pay attention to monster abilities that change the basic rules and tactics of combat, and give players the cues they need to recognize them. Describe the ability as it might appear in the game world, and then describe it in game terms to make it clear.

For example, if the adventurers are fighting a pit fiend, whose aura of fire deals fire damage to creatures within 5 squares, you might tell the players (before their characters come in range), “The heat emanating from the devil is intense even at this distance. You know that getting within 5 squares of it is going to burn you.”

Game States, Conditions, and Effects: Since character abilities can sometimes hinge on a game state, condition, or effect that affects their opponent, make it clear to the players how their enemies are doing. Be descriptive, considering the source of the condition, but also be explicit.

The most important combat state is bloodied, which is a gauge for the players on how the fight is going as well as a cue to use certain powers. Tell them when an enemy is under any condition, is bloodied, or under an effect and tell them when it ends. Further, if an adversary heals, the characters should notice, and the players should be told—especially if the monster is no longer bloodied.

For example, when a monster gets bloodied by lightning damage, you might say, “Lightning courses over its body, forcing it to stagger backward, opening small wounds and burning its skin. It's bloodied.” When the adventurers' troll opponent regenerates, say, “Recent cuts knit together before your eyes. It's regenerating!” If a creature is dazed due to a fear-inducing power, you could say, “Its eyes bulge wide, and it starts to shake. It's dazed.”

Hazards, Traps, and Obstacles: Be sure to include any important setting details the players need to know. If the adventurers can sense a hazard or obstacle, you should emphasize that element. It's better for the game if the characters sense hints of impending danger. Tell the players how dangerous something looks, or tell them their characters aren't sure how dangerous something is, and more investigation might be required. A little prompting can go a long way. Further, knowing that something might be dangerous actually builds tension and fun. A hazard that springs out of nowhere has none of that appeal.

For example, if a weak floor might collapse under the adventurers, you might describe the floor as cracked or sagging slightly. A trap could leave behind signs from its past victims or the times it was tripped and missed. Rubble from a cave-in might let air through, hinting that the characters might be able to get through, whereas rubble that slowly lets water through lets the players know that removing the debris is a bad idea. Crackling lightning on an unattended weapon might mean the weapon is dangerous (some sort of trap), but it could just mean the item is magical.

Magic Items: Speaking of magic items, when the adventurers get over their fear of the lightning-charged magic sword and pick it up, tell them what it is and what it does after they've examined it over the course of a short rest. It's not fun to make characters guess what a magic item is or try to use a magic item without knowing its capabilities. You can make an exception for really special items. Even then, tell the player at least any numerical bonus the item gives. You don't want to hear, "I hit AC 31 . . . plus whatever this sword's bonus is," for hours or weeks on end.

READING AN ADVENTURE

Published adventures are presented in a format that's designed to make them easy to prepare and easy to use at the table.

At the start of an adventure, you'll find a section of introductory material. Included in this section are background information about the situation that leads to the adventure and a synopsis of the events of the adventure itself, as they're most likely to play out.

You'll also find adventure hooks designed to draw characters into the plot of the adventure. Look for ways to incorporate those hooks into your current adventure, rather than abruptly throwing them in front of the players at the start of the next one. Plot is a strong linking tool, and the more you can weave an adventure hook into the course of another adventure, the better. For example, one of the adventure hooks for *Reavers of Harkenwold* (the two-part adventure included in this box) has the Lord Warden of Fallcrest learn that mercenaries have taken over Harkenwold. You could just tell the characters at the start of the adventure that Lord Warden Markelhay has summoned them to his presence, but the adventure starts to feel like part of your campaign if the player characters are the ones who discover this information while pursuing another adventure, and they bring the news to Lord Markelhay themselves.

Following the introduction and overview at the start, most of the rest of the adventure describes encounters the characters might have. The next section explains how to read and use these encounters.

A published adventure typically ends with a conclusion that details the consequences of the adventure and plants seeds for future adventures.

Using Tactical Encounters

Each encounter includes several common elements, as described below.

Encounter Level Each tactical encounter assumes a group of five player characters. An encounter of average difficulty is one where the encounter level is equal to the level of the party. For example, the first encounter in *Reavers of Harkenwold* (Encounter E1: Ilyana's Plight on page 12 of book 1) is a level 2 encounter. Encounters that are 1 or 2 levels lower than the party are easy encounters, while encounters that are 2 or more levels higher than the party are hard encounters.

For overcoming an encounter, a group earns the XP value listed beside the encounter level. This amount should be divided by the number of group members, and an equal amount should be awarded to each character.

Setup This section of a tactical encounter provides the basic parameters of the encounter.

First, it provides context or background information for the encounter. Next, it provides a key to the monsters in the encounter so you can locate them on the tactical map. For example, the setup text for "Ilyana's Plight" indicates that the gray wolves are represented on the map by the letter W. The map of each encounter area indicates where the monsters are located when the encounter begins. The setup section also describes what monsters are doing and how they react when the adventurers arrive.

Read Aloud Text Read aloud text provides information about what the characters can see and are aware of. You do not have to read it word for word; feel free to paraphrase and use your own words when describing this information. Use read aloud text wisely; they are written for the most common approach to a particular situation and what your player characters do might require you to alter the information in any number of ways.

Monster Statistics Encounters include statistics blocks for each monster type present in the encounter. If more than one monster of a particular kind is present, the statistics block indicates how many creatures can be found. See the following pages for a guide to using monster statistics.

Tactics This entry describes special actions the monsters take to defeat the adventurers. Sometimes this means the monsters take advantage of special features of the area or make use of special powers or equipment.

Map Each encounter includes a map keyed with the initial locations of each monster. The map also indicates the location of any special features of the area. Adventures often include poster maps depicting key encounter areas. For other encounters, you can either recreate a version of the encounter map using D&D *Dungeon Tiles* or draw it on a battle map.

Features of the Area This section describes special features noted on the map. If the location has items or areas of interest with which the characters can interact, those features are described here. Look here to see if a door is out of the ordinary, if an altar has a secret compartment, or if the area includes treasure.

READING MONSTER STATISTICS

Monster statistics are presented in a format designed to be easy to use and reference. A typical statistics block is formatted as follows.

Monster Name	Level and Role
Size, origin, and type (keywords), race	XP value

A monster's level and role are tools for you to use when building an encounter. Chapter 5 explains how to use these tools.

Name: A word or phrase that identifies the monster.

Level: A measure of the creature's power. A monster's level ranges from 1 to 30 or more. Monster level and adventurer level are comparable, so five level 3 monsters are a good match for five level 3 adventurers.

Role: Every monster has a role to play in a combat encounter. Monster roles are **artillery**, **brute**, **controller**, **lurker**, **skirmisher**, and **soldier**. A monster might have a second role: elite, solo, or minion. Elite monsters and solo monster are tougher than standard monsters, and minions are weaker.

In addition, a monster might have the leader subrole, indicating that it grants some sort of boon to its allies, such as a beneficial aura.

See "Monster Roles" on page 197 for more information.

Size: A creature's size determines its space (the area measured in squares that a creature occupies on the battle grid) as well as its reach (how many squares away a creature can touch). A creature might have a greater reach depending on the characteristics of its body. See page 123 for more on size, space, and reach.

Origin: A monster's origin describes its place in the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS game cosmology. *Aberrant* monsters are native to the Far Realm or corrupted by its alien influence, *elemental* monsters come from the Elemental Chaos, *fey* creatures come from the Feywild, *immortal* creatures come from the Astral Sea, *natural* monsters originate in the world, and *shadow* creatures come from the Shadowfell.

Type: A creature's type summarizes some basic facts about its appearance and behavior. *Animate* creatures are given life through magic. *Beasts* are ordinary animals or creatures akin to them, driven by instinct. *Humanoids* are bipedal

creatures with intellect and culture. *Magical beasts* resemble beasts but often behave like people.

Keywords/Race: Some monsters have keywords that further define them.

These keywords represent groups of monsters, such as **angel**, **demon**, **devil**, **dragon**, and **undead**. Others indicate that a creature is made up of or strongly linked to a certain type of elemental force: **air**, **cold**, **earth**, **fire**, or **water**.

Monsters can have more than one keyword. This part of the entry might also include a monster's race if its race is not included in the monster's name.

Experience Points (XP): This entry gives the experience point award for defeating the monster.

HP maximum; Bloodied value	Initiative modifier
AC, Fortitude , Reflex , Will	Perception modifier
Speed	Special senses
Immune type/effect; Resist type; Vulnerable type	
Saving Throws modifier; Action Points number	

Hit Points (HP): The monster's maximum total hit points. Damage that a monster takes is subtracted from its hit points.

Bloodied: Half the monster's total hit points. If the monster's current hit points are equal to or less than this value, the monster is bloodied.

Initiative: The monster's initiative modifier appears here.

Defenses: This line of the monster's statistics block lists the monster's four defenses: its Armor Class (AC) and its **Fortitude**, **Reflex**, and **Will**.

Perception: Every monster has a Perception check modifier, shown at the top of the statistics block to help you determine whether it notices characters who are trying to sneak up on it.

Speed: This is the number of squares the monster can move with the walk action. Alternative movement modes, such as fly, climb, or swim, are listed as well.

Special Senses: Some monsters have special senses that allow them to detect enemies in unusual situations, such as darkvision or tremorsense. See "Vision and Special Senses" on page 96 for more information about special senses.

Immune: If a monster is immune to a damage type (such as cold or fire), it doesn't take that type of damage (page 145).

Resist: A creature that has resistance takes less damage from a specific damage type (page 145).

Vulnerable: A creature that is vulnerable to a particular damage type takes a specific amount of extra damage when it takes damage of that type, the creature is subject to a specific effect, or both (page 145).

Saving Throws: Some monsters have bonuses to saving throws. A monster adds its bonuses to its saving throw result to see if an effect ends (page 148).

Action Points: Elite and solo monsters have action points they can spend to take extra actions, just as player characters do. Unlike adventurers, a monster can spend more than 1 action point in an encounter, but only 1 per round.

TRAITS
⚙️ Aura Name (keywords) ⬆️ Aura size
Effect.
Trait Name (keywords)
Effect.

The Traits section includes characteristics of the creature that are not powers. Many traits are always in effect, such as regeneration or the ability to deal extra damage on certain attacks. Others can be turned on or off, such as an aura or a benefit for a creature's mount or rider.

Aura: An aura is a continuous effect that emanates from a creature. It's denoted by a special icon (⚙️), and the aura's size is noted to the right of its name. A creature's aura affects each square within line of effect and within the specified distance from that creature. A creature's aura does not affect the creature itself, unless otherwise noted, and is unaffected by terrain or environmental phenomena.

If auras overlap and impose penalties to the same roll or game statistic, a creature affected by the overlapping auras is subjected to the worst penalty; the penalties are not cumulative. For instance, if a creature is affected by three overlapping auras that each impose a -2 penalty to attack rolls, the creature takes a -2 penalty, not a -6 penalty.

STANDARD / MOVE / MINOR / FREE ACTIONS
[Icon] Power Name (keywords) ⬆️ Usage
<i>Requirement:</i>
<i>Attack:</i> Type range (target); bonus vs. defense
<i>Hit/Miss/Effect/Sustain Action/Secondary Attack/Aftereffect/Failed Saving Throws/Special:</i>

A monster's standard, move, minor, and non-triggered free actions are organized by action type.

A monster's powers are presented under their respective action type in order of usage, from at-will to recharge to encounter powers.

Type: Each power has an icon that represents its type: melee (⚔️), ranged (🏹), close (↔️), or area (⚡️). If a power doesn't have an icon, it's a personal power. The type is also indicated on the right-hand side of the power next to range.

doesn't require a separate action. As with normal attack powers, the target of a secondary attack is identified after the attack's type and range.

Sustain: If a power has a "Sustain" entry (see "Sustained Durations," page 147), the monster can keep part of that power active by taking a specific type of action before the end of each of its turns.

Aftereffect: An aftereffect automatically occurs after another effect ends. An "Aftereffect" entry follows the effect it applies to, which is typically in a "Hit" or an "Effect" entry. For example, a power's "Hit" entry might state that the target is stunned (save ends), and then the power's "Aftereffect" entry might state that the target is dazed instead of stunned (save ends). Together those entries mean that the target is dazed as soon as it saves against the stunned condition.

If a target is subjected to an aftereffect as a result of a save, and that save occurs when the target is making multiple saving throws, the aftereffect takes effect only after the target has finished making all its saving throws. In other words, a target usually can't save against an aftereffect in the same turn in which it is subjected to an aftereffect. See "Saving Throws," page 148, for how saving throws work.

Failed Saving Throw: Sometimes an effect changes when a target fails a saving throw against it. The new effect, specified in a "Failed Saving Throw" entry, occurs only after the target has finished making all its saving throws at the end of its turn. The effect does not change if the target fails a saving throw against it at a time other than the end of its turn.

Special: Any unusual information about the use of a power appears in this entry. For example, some powers can be used as basic attacks, which is noted in a "Special" entry.

TRIGGERED ACTIONS

[Icon] Power Name (keywords) ♦ Usage

Requirement:

Trigger:

Attack (Action): Type range (target); bonus vs. defense

Hit/Miss/Effect (Action)/Sustain Action/Secondary Attack/Aftereffect/Failed Saving Throws/Special:

This section contains powers that have triggers. These powers have a few entries that other powers don't.

Trigger: A trigger defines when a monster is able to use a power. A monster must still be able to take the power's required action and meet any requirements.

(Action): A triggered power's action type, if any, is indicated in parentheses after the power's "Attack" or "Effect" header. These types include immediate reactions, immediate interrupts, opportunity actions, and free actions. Some

powers don't require an action to use; they simply occur in response to a trigger, such as a creature becoming bloodied or dying.

Skills skill modifiers		
Str score (modifier)	Dex score (modifier)	Wis score (modifier)
Con score (modifier)	Int score (modifier)	Cha score (modifier)
Alignment	Languages	
Equipment		

Skills: The skills section of a monster's statistics block includes only trained skills or skills for which the monster has an unusual modifier. A monster's Perception modifier isn't repeated here, even if Perception is trained.

Ability Scores: A monster's six ability scores are included toward the bottom of its statistics block. Following each score in parentheses is the adjusted ability score modifier, including one-half the monster's level, which is useful whenever the monster needs to make an untrained skill check or an ability check.

Alignment: A monster's most typical alignment is noted in its statistics block. Chapter 2 contains information on the various alignments.

Languages: This entry gives the languages that a monster can speak and understand. An individual monster might know additional languages, like Common or the languages of its companions. Chapter 2 includes more information about the languages of the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS game world.

Equipment: This entry notes important items a monster is carrying. A monster might carry equipment that is not noted in the "Equipment" section. Equipment that is unimportant to a monster is left for the DM to decide. Although a monster might have a longsword basic attack, you decide whether the monster is using the longsword or a different weapon, if the item is magical, or whether the monster is using a weapon at all. Removing or changing a monster's weapon does not change a power's effect or damage unless you choose to implement a change.

If a character gains a monster's equipment, he or she can use it as normal equipment. A character does not gain the powers that a monster uses through its equipment.

A piece of equipment that adventurers use does not necessarily have the same properties for monsters. A monster using the item does not benefit from the property unless that monster noted in its statistics.

Healing Surges: Monsters have healing surges, but few monsters have powers that let them spend healing surges. The number of healing surges a monster has is based on its level: 1-10, one healing surge; 11-20, two healing surges; 21 or higher, three healing surges.

Because they rarely come into play, healing surges are not included in a monster's statistics block.

READING A POWER

No part of the game has as much variety as powers. The format a power uses follows three basic principles.

Entries: A power's information is organized into named entries: "Attack," "Hit," "Miss," and the like.

Sequence: The order of entries in a power description is a general guide to the sequence in which the power's effects occur.

Indentation: When a power entry is indented, that entry is a subentry and is contingent on the entry above it. For instance, a "Secondary Attack" subentry indented right below the primary attack's "Hit" entry is a reminder that the secondary attack occurs only if the primary attack hits.

Name	Origin/Type/Level
<i>Flavor text.</i>	
Usage ♦ Keywords	
Action Type	Attack/Utility type and range
Trigger:	
Prerequisite:	
Requirement:	
Target:	
Attack:	
Hit/Miss/Effect/Secondary Attack/Secondary Power/Sustain/Class Feature Rider/ Aftereffect/Failed Saving Throws/Level/Special:	

Entries in a Power

A power description contains various entries, some of which appear in every power description, whereas other entries appear only when needed by a particular power. Here are explanations of the various entries, presented in their typical order in a player power.

Name, Origin, Type, and Level: The name of a power, its origin (a class, a race, or something else), its type (attack or utility), and the power's level, if any, appear in a colored bar on the first line of the power's description. The color of the bar indicates how often the character can use the power; green means the power is an at-will power, red means it's an encounter power, and black means it's a daily power.

Attack Powers: These powers are used to damage others. Some attack powers include beneficial effects as well.

Utility Powers: These powers have a variety of uses, including granting bonuses. Some are useful only outside combat, some are useful only in combat, and others are useful in any situation.

Flavor Text: The next line, in italicized text, briefly explains what the power does from the perspective of a character in the world.

Usage: Whether a power is an attack or a utility power, it has a usage type: at-will, encounter, or daily.

At-Will Powers: The character can use an at-will power as often as he or she wants.

Encounter Powers: The power can be used once per encounter and recharges after a short rest.

Daily Powers: The power can be used only once per day and recharges after an extended rest.

Keywords: The power's keywords appear next. The keywords indicate the power source, school of magic (if any), accessories that can be used with it, damage types associated with the power, and other effect types.

Power Sources: Every class relies on a particular source of energy to fuel its powers. If a power has more than one power source keyword, the power counts as belonging to each of those power sources.

The most common power sources are arcane, divine, martial, and primal. Other power sources exist, including psionic and shadow.

Schools of Magic: Wizards have identified various types of magic and have grouped them into categories, which are called schools. The three most common schools include enchantment, evocation, and illusion.

Accessories: The two accessory keywords—implement and weapon—indicate whether a power can be used with an implement or a weapon.

Damage Types: Many attacks deal a specific type of damage, and each damage type has a keyword associated with it. The damage types are acid, cold, fire, force, lightning, necrotic, poison (both a damage type and an effect type), psychic, radiant, and thunder. If a power has one of these keywords, it deals the associated type of damage. If the notation “Varies” appears among a power's keywords, that means the power has variable damage types.

Effect Types: Effect type keywords signify the presence of particular effects in powers, and many of these keywords have special rules that govern how their powers are used. The main effect type keywords include the following: aura, charm, conjuration, fear, healing, illusion, poison, polymorph, reliable, stance, summoning, teleportation, and zone. For more information about these effect types, see the *Rules Compendium*.

Action Type: The next line begins with the type of action required to use the power: standard action, move action, minor action, free action, immediate reaction, immediate interrupt, or opportunity action. Some powers require no action to use. See “Action Types,” page 118.

Attack/Utility Type and Range: The power's attack/utility type and range appear on the same line as its action type. The attack/utility types are melee, ranged, area, close, and personal. See “Attack and Utility Types,” page 133, for how each type works.

Trigger: Powers that are immediate actions (interrupts or reactions) or opportunity actions have a trigger, which defines the moment a character is allowed to use the power. Some powers that are free actions, or that require no action to use, have a trigger as well. See “Triggered Actions,” page 119, for how triggered actions work.

Prerequisite: If a power has this entry, a character must meet the noted prerequisite to select the power.

Requirement: If a power has this entry, the requirement must be met every time the power is used. Some requirements are things that must have happened recently, such as a character attacking someone earlier in a turn. Other requirements are things a character must do, such as wielding a certain weapon, while using a power.

Target: If a power directly affects one or more creatures, it has a “Target” entry, specifying whom or what the power can affect. See “Choosing Targets,” page 134. If a power directly affects only its user or the environment, the power lacks this entry.

If the power contains a secondary or a tertiary target, this entry is labeled “Primary Target” to distinguish this target definition from the power’s other target definition. See “Secondary Attacks” and “Secondary Powers” below.

Primary Target: If the power has a secondary or a tertiary target, this entry is labeled “Primary Target” to distinguish this target definition from the power’s other target definition. See “Secondary Attacks” and “Secondary Powers” below.

Attack: This entry specifies the ability modifier used to make an attack roll with a power and which of the target’s defenses is attacked. The entry also notes any special modifiers that apply to the attack roll.

If a character uses a power against multiple targets at once, he or she makes a separate attack roll against each target.

See “Attack Rolls,” page 137, for more information on making an attack.

Hit: This entry specifies what happens to a target that is hit by a power’s attack. If a power hits multiple targets, this entry applies to each of those targets individually.

Miss: This entry specifies what happens to a target that is missed by a power’s attack. If a power misses multiple targets, this entry applies to each of those targets individually.

“Half damage” in this entry means a missed target takes damage as if hit by the attack, but that damage is halved. See page 144.

Effect: “Effect” entries simply happen. Even if the effect is associated with an attack, the effect happens whether or not the attack hits.

Secondary Attacks: Some powers include secondary, or even tertiary, attacks. A “Hit,” a “Miss,” or an “Effect” entry notes when to make such an attack. Unless noted otherwise, the attack type, the range, and the keywords of a secondary

attack are the same as those of the power, and the secondary attack doesn't require a separate action from the action used for the primary attack. If a secondary attack has its own keywords, those keywords are noted in parentheses up front, either as keywords that are gained or lost.

Some secondary attacks have the same targets as their primary attacks, whereas others have targets of their own, noted in "Secondary Target" entries.

Secondary Powers: Some powers encompass what are called secondary powers. A secondary power requires a separate action from the action used for the encompassing power, and a character must use the encompassing power to use the secondary power.

A secondary power specifies its action type, attack/utility type, range, and effects. A secondary power also has its own keywords, which are noted in parentheses up front.

Some secondary powers have the same targets as their encompassing powers. Others have targets of their own, noted in "Secondary Target" entries.

Sustain: If a character uses a power that has a "Sustain" entry, that character can keep part of that power active by taking a specific type of action before the end of each of his or her turns, starting on the turn after using the power. See "Sustained Durations," page 147, for more about sustaining a power.

Class Feature Rider: Some powers contain entries that are riders—changes to the powers—tied to certain class features. If a power contains a class feature rider, the class feature's name appears as the entry's name. The rider applies only if the character using the power has the class feature.

Aftereffect: An aftereffect automatically occurs after another effect ends. An "Aftereffect" entry follows the effect it applies to, which is typically in a "Hit" or an "Effect" entry. See page 87 for more information.

If a target is subjected to an aftereffect after a save and that save occurs when the target is making multiple saving throws, the aftereffect takes effect after the target has made all of them. See "Saving Throws," page 148.

Failed Saving Throw: Sometimes an effect changes as a target fails saving throws against it. The new effect, specified in a "Failed Saving Throw" entry, takes effect after the target fails a saving throw against the previous effect at the end of the target's turn. The effect does not change if the target fails a saving throw against it at a time other than the end of its turn.

Level: The strength of some powers increases as their users gain levels. Such a power contains one or more entries that specify what part of the power changes, and in what ways, when its user reaches certain levels. For example, a power might contain the following subentry beneath its "Hit" entry: "Level 21: 2d8 + Intelligence modifier fire damage." That means the "Hit" entry's damage changes to the specified amount when the user reaches 21st level.

Special: Any unusual information about the use of a power appears in this entry.

EXPLORATION

A significant part of *DUNGEONS & DRAGONS* adventures is exploration, which takes place between encounters. Exploration includes adventurers making their way through unmapped dungeon corridors, untracked wilderness, or a sprawling city and exploring the environment's dangers and wonders.

Exploration usually involves movement, so this section covers the rules for moving when the characters aren't in an encounter. When adventurers are exploring, you need to know what they can see, particularly in a dark dungeon, so a discussion of vision and light follows the movement rules.

Movement

Movement is what gets characters from encounter to encounter and from one place to another within an encounter. This section provides rules for movement between encounters, whereas "Movement, Distance, and Terrain," page 123, explains movement during a combat encounter.

Often you can summarize the adventurers' movement as they explore, without figuring out exact distances or travel times: "You travel for three days and reach the dungeon entrance." Even in a dungeon, particularly a large dungeon or a cave network, you can summarize movement between encounters.

You might evocatively describe the terrain the characters pass over, but the encounters along the way are the focus of the adventures. Sometimes it's important, however, to know how long it takes to get from one encounter to another, whether the answer is in days, hours, or minutes. The Base Exploration Speed table shows how much distance a character who has a given speed covers in a day, an hour, or a minute of travel. A group of travelers moves at the slowest traveler's pace, so most groups use the table's first row (to accommodate the group's dwarves and heavily armored members).

BASE EXPLORATION SPEED

Speed	Per Day	Per Hour	Per Minute
5	25 miles	2½ miles	250 ft.
6	30 miles	3 miles	300 ft.
7	35 miles	3½ miles	350 ft.
8	40 miles	4 miles	400 ft.

Speed per Day: Player characters can sustain a normal walking pace for 10 hours of travel a day without tiring out. Ordinary people can't walk for more than 6 or 8 hours in a day, so their travel rate is more like 15 to 25 miles per day.

Speed per Hour: The speed per hour on the Base Exploration Speed table assumes a walking pace.

Speed per Minute: The speed per minute on the Base Exploration Speed table assumes a walking pace and is intended for travel that takes less than an hour.

Terrain The distances on the Base Exploration Speed table assume relatively clear terrain—roads, open plains, or dungeon corridors that aren't choked with rubble. Other terrain does slow characters' progress. How much? That depends on the prevalence of difficult terrain in the area.

TERRAIN AND TRAVEL

Distance Multiplier	Terrain
× ½	Mostly difficult terrain (dense forests, mountains, deep swamps, rubble-choked ruins)
× ¾	Extensive difficult terrain (forests, hills, swamps, crumbling ruins, caves, city streets)
× 1	Very little difficult terrain (open fields, plains, roads, clear dungeon corridors)

To figure out how far the characters travel per day, hour, or minute, multiply the distance shown on the Base Exploration Speed table by the distance multiplier shown on the Terrain and Movement table.

Mounts and Vehicles When traveling long distances outdoors, characters can use mounts or vehicles to increase their speed, their carrying capacity, or both. This table shows the effective speed of common mounts and vehicles. The table assumes a day of travel is 10 hours long, although sailing ships can sail 24 hours a day if properly crewed.

MOUNTS AND VEHICLES

Mount/Vehicle	Speed	Per Day	Per Hour
Riding horse	10	50 miles	5 miles
Warhorse	8	40 miles	4 miles
Cart or wagon	5	25 miles	2½ miles
Rowboat	3	15 miles	1½ miles
Downstream	4-6	20-30 miles	2-3 miles
Sailing ship	7	84 miles	3½ miles

Marching Order It's a good idea for a group of adventurers to establish a standard marching order, the way the characters are normally arranged when traveling. The players can change their marching order any time, but having it set out before they get into an encounter lets you know exactly where everyone is when the encounter begins.

You can record the characters' marching order any way you like: Write it on paper or a whiteboard, or arrange your miniatures on the battle grid to show your relative position. You can also have the players create different marching orders for different situations—one marching order for corridors that are 2 squares wide and one for open areas, for example.

Vision and Light

As the adventurers explore their environment, you tell the players what they see, from the obvious, such as the dimensions of a corridor, to the hidden, such as a pit trap.

Characters automatically see the obvious, but they use the Perception skill (page 104) to try to see hidden creatures and objects. If they aren't actively searching an area, you can determine whether they see hidden objects or creatures by using their passive Perception checks (page 78). That's why it's a good idea to note the passive Perception checks of each character, but pay particular attention to the best passive Perception in the party.

Adventurers can't see anything without some light. Many dungeons and caverns are illuminated to some degree, since only a few monsters are truly at home in pitch blackness. Dungeons are often illuminated by torches (sometimes magic torches that never stop burning), ceiling panels magically imbued with light, great oil-filled braziers or stone channels that burn continuously, or even globes of light that drift through the air.

Caverns might be filled with phosphorescent fungi or lichen, extraordinary mineral veins that glimmer in the dark, streams of glowing lava, or eerie aurora-like veils of magic fire undulating high above a cavern floor.

EXAMPLE LIGHT SOURCES

Source	Radius	Brightness	Duration
Candle	2	Dim	1 hour
Torch	5	Bright	1 hour
Lantern	10	Bright	8 hours/pint
Campfire	10	Bright	8 hours
Sunrod	20	Bright	4 hours
Phosphorescent fungi	10	Dim	Ongoing
Sacrificial brazier	10	Bright	8 hours
Fireplace/oven	5	Bright	8 hours/load of fuel
Forge	2	Bright	8 hours/load of fuel
Magma	40	Bright	Ongoing
Tiny fire creature	2	Bright	Ongoing
Small fire creature	5	Bright	Ongoing
Medium fire creature	10	Bright	Ongoing
Large fire creature	20	Bright	Ongoing
Huge or Gargantuan fire creature	40	Bright	Ongoing

The Example Light Sources table lists light sources, both mundane and magical. The table describes the radius (in squares) of the light, the brightness, and the duration of the light effect. You can alter these numbers as you see fit in the context of a specific terrain you make.

The last entries on the table show the light emitted by fire creatures—fire elementals or hell hounds, for example. Only creatures made of fire (which includes most creatures that have the fire keyword) shed this much light.

Assuming nothing blocks their view, creatures can see most light sources from at least a quarter-mile away, and can see exceptionally bright sources from up to a mile away.

Categories of Light Light in the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS game is defined in three categories: bright light, dim light, and darkness.

Bright Light: This category includes the light provided by most portable light sources, daylight, and the light cast by surrounding fires or lava. There are no special rules for vision in bright light.

Dim Light: This category includes the light provided by a candle or another dim light source, moonlight, indirect illumination (such as in a cave interior whose entrance is nearby or in a subterranean passageway that has narrow shafts extending to the surface), and the light cast by things such as phosphorescent fungi. Squares of dim light are lightly obscured, but creatures with special senses (including low-light vision and darkvision) can ignore the concealment provided by dim light. (See “Concealment,” page 142.)

Darkness: Darkness prevails outside on a moonless night or in rooms with no light sources. Squares of darkness are totally obscured.

Vision and Special Senses

Many creatures see in the dark much better than humans do. Some creatures even see in complete lightlessness. Other creatures get along in the dark by using other senses—uncanny hearing, sensitivity to vibrations and air movement, or an acute sense of smell.

Normal Vision: Creatures that have normal vision see normally in areas of bright light. While attacking creatures in dim light or darkness, these creatures take attack penalties for concealment (page 142).

Low-Light Vision: A creature that has low-light vision can see in dim light without penalty. It ignores the -2 attack penalty when it attacks a target that has concealment as a result of dim light.

Darkvision: A creature that has darkvision can see in dim light and darkness without penalty. It ignores the attack penalty when it attacks a target that has concealment as a result of dim light or darkness.

Blindsight: A creature that has blindsight can clearly see creatures or objects within a specified range and within line of effect, even if they are invisible or obscured. The creature otherwise relies on its normal vision.

Tremorsense: A creature that has tremorsense can clearly see creatures or objects within a specified range, even if they are invisible, obscured, or outside line of effect, but both they and the creature must be in contact with the ground or the same substance, such as water or a web.

Opening Doors

Usually a creature can open a door simply by using a minor action (page 119). Sometimes, though, adventurers encounter doors that are stuck or even locked. Forcing open a stuck or a locked door requires a standard action and a successful Strength check.

The table DCs to Force Open Doors shows some sample doors and includes the Strength check DC to force or break them open. Each entry also shows a range of target levels, which provides a guide for the Dungeon Master in placing elements appropriate to the level of the adventurers. A wooden door, for example, provides a suitably challenging barrier for characters of levels 1 to 5. By 16th level, the same door becomes simple even for a weak character to overcome. Rather than artificially inflate the DCs of mundane obstacles as adventurers advance in level, it's better to use stronger obstacles—an iron door is as challenging to a 16th-level character as the wooden door was at 1st level.

The DC for breaking down a door is usually the moderate DC for the midpoint of the specified level range, meaning that the task is straightforward for a character with a high Strength score but difficult for anyone else (and more difficult for characters below the target level). For more challenging tasks, the DCs are 5 higher than the moderate DCs for that level, meaning that a strong character of the appropriate level has about a one-in-three chance of success.

DCS TO FORCE OPEN DOORS

Strength Check To . . .	DC	Target Levels
Break down wooden door	13	1-5
Break down reinforced door	16	6-10
Break down barred door	20	11-15
Break down iron door	23	16-20
Break down adamantine door	27	21-25
Break through force portal	30	26-30
Force open wooden portcullis	21	6-10
Force open iron portcullis	28	16-20
Force open adamantine portcullis	35	26-30

Breaking Objects

In addition to breaking down doors, adventurers have a habit of smashing other objects they encounter. The rules can't cover every possible object that the adventurers might decide needs destruction, but these guidelines and examples should help the DM find the right numbers to use.

Some objects can be broken simply with a successful Strength check (usually a standard action). If you can imagine an adventurer breaking an object with his or her bare hands (or with a well-placed kick or shoulder), the DM should assign a Strength DC using the following examples as a baseline. As with doors, a range of target levels is included to help the DM know at which levels these objects remain challenging to break.

The DC for breaking an object is usually the moderate DC for the midpoint of the specified level range, meaning that the task is straightforward for a character with a high Strength score but difficult for anyone else (and more difficult for characters below the target level). For more challenging tasks, the DCs are 5 higher than the moderate DCs for that level, meaning that a strong character of the appropriate level has about a one-in-three chance of success.

DCS TO BREAK OBJECTS

Strength Check To . . .	DC	Target Levels
Smash wooden chest	16	6-10
Smash iron box	23	16-20
Smash adamantine box	30	26-30
Burst rope bonds	21	6-10
Burst iron chains	28	16-20
Burst adamantine chains	35	26-30
Break through wooden wall (6 in. thick)	25	16-20
Break through masonry wall (1 ft. thick)	35	26-30

Attacking Objects

Sometimes a Strength check isn't sufficient to damage or destroy an object, often because of the object's size, durability, or both. Alternatively, a character might need to destroy an object from across the room. In such cases, attacking an object with a power can provide the answer. At the DM's discretion, any power that targets one or more creatures can target one or more objects (see "Choosing Targets," page 134).

Object Defenses and Hit Points

Like creatures, objects have hit points. They also have defenses: AC, Fortitude, and Reflex. Objects don't have Will, however (see "Object Immunities" below).

Determining Defenses: An object's AC, Fortitude, and Reflex depend entirely on its size, as noted in the Object Properties table. The defenses show that it's pretty easy to hit an object—so easy, in fact, that many DMs skip the attack roll against an object, unless the situation is particularly dramatic.

Determining Hit Points: An object's hit point total generally depends on two factors: the object's size and material. As a rule, larger or thicker objects have more hit points than smaller or thinner ones. Objects made of stone or metal have more hit points than those made of wood or glass.

Exceptions to this general rule abound. An object that's big but full of delicate moving parts might have fewer hit points than a smaller, more solid object, because it doesn't take as much damage to render that object functionally useless.

To determine an object's hit points, first find its size on the Object Properties table. Then consult the Object Hit Point Multipliers table and apply the appropriate multipliers based on the object's material, composition, or both. If more than one multiplier is appropriate, it doesn't matter what order you apply them in. A Large iron clockwork contraption, for instance, should have around 60 hit points (40 for Large, $\times 3$ for iron, $\times 0.5$ for intricate construction).

An object reduced to 0 hit points is destroyed or otherwise rendered useless. At the DM's discretion, the object might even be more or less whole, but its functionality is ruined—a door knocked from its hinges or a clockwork mechanism broken internally, for example.

Even though an object has hit points, it is never considered to be bloodied. The DM can certainly describe when the object has less than half of its hit points remaining ("The door is barely holding together now," for instance), but effects that are triggered by a target being bloodied are not triggered by an object.

OBJECT PROPERTIES

Size	AC/Reflex	Fortitude	Base HP	Examples
Tiny	10	5	5	Bottle, book
Small	8	8	10	Treasure chest, manacles
Medium	5	10	20	Door, statue
Large	4	12	40	Wagon, vault door
Huge	3	15	100	Big statue
Gargantuan	2	20	200	Even bigger statue

OBJECT HIT POINT MULTIPLIERS

Multiplier	Material/Composition
× 0.25	Very fragile
× 0.5	Fragile or intricate
× 1.5	Reinforced
× 0.1	Paper or cloth
× 0.25	Glass or ice
× 0.5	Leather or hide
—	Wood
× 2	Stone
× 3	Iron or steel
× 5	Adamantine

Object Immunities

Unless noted otherwise, an object has the following immunities:

- ◆ necrotic damage
- ◆ poison damage
- ◆ psychic damage
- ◆ any attack that targets Will

The DM might decide that a particular object is immune to other damage types. For instance, the DM could decide that a magic altar is immune to fire.

Object Resistances and Vulnerabilities

Objects don't have any default resistances or vulnerabilities, but the DM might rule that some kinds of damage are particularly effective against a certain object, that the object has vulnerability to that damage. For example, a gauzy curtain or a pile of dry papers might have vulnerable 5 fire because any spark is likely to destroy it.

Similarly, the DM might occasionally decide that an unusual material resists a type of damage, that the object has resist 5 or 10 to that damage.

USING CHECKS

A typical adventure environment is full of dangers, surprises, and puzzles. A dungeon room might hold a complex bank of mysterious levers, a statue positioned over a trap door, a locked chest, or a teleportation circle. Sometimes adventurers need to cut through a rope, break a chain, bash down a door, lift a portcullis, or smash the Orb of the Reaver before the villain can use it.

Characters' interaction with the environment is often simple to resolve in the game. If a player tells you that his or her character is moving the lever on the right, you tell the player what happens, if anything. The lever might be part of a fiendishly clever puzzle that requires the adventurers to pull several levers in the right order before the room completely fills with water, testing their ingenuity to the limit, but no rules govern the character's attempt to pull the lever. The players simply tell you which levers they pull.

If a lever is rusted in position, though, you might ask the player to make an **ability check**; no particular skill is involved, just a raw test of the character's Strength. Similarly, you might call for a Strength check to see if a character can break through a barred door or lift an adamantine portcullis.

Characters might also use **skill checks** to use, manipulate, or destroy objects in the dungeon environment. For example, you might call for an Arcana check as a character tries to move an orb suspended in the air that's part of a complex magical puzzle. This section describes how to use skill and ability checks to figure out what happens when characters attempt various tasks within the game world.

Whenever a character attempts an action, answer these three questions to decide how to adjudicate it:

- ◆ What kind of check is it?
- ◆ How hard is it?
- ◆ What's the result?



What Kind of Check?

First of all, make sure that the situation actually calls for a check. If there's no chance of failure, don't bother with a check.

Assuming that there is a chance of failure, determine what kind of check is appropriate: an ability check, a skill check, or an attack.

Use an **ability check** if the task is fundamentally a measure of one of the character's key attributes (ability scores), and if training of any kind isn't a factor. All that matters with an ability check is the character's level, ability score, and luck (represented by the die roll).

Use a **skill check** if training of some kind—the knowledge and talents that a character learns, represented by skill training—might be a factor in the outcome of the task. A skill check is really just a specialized kind of ability check that takes skill training into account. The only difference between an Athletics check and a Strength check is that some characters are trained in Athletics—they've studied and practiced to become better at climbing, jumping, swimming, and other athletic pursuits than other characters.

Use an **attack** for any direct attempt to cause harm to an enemy. Attacks are another specialized form of ability check, one that takes a character's skill with a weapon into account (in the form of a proficiency bonus). Generally, when a character tries to cause harm to an object rather than an enemy, use an ability check instead. The fighter's skill with an axe doesn't necessarily help him break down a dungeon door. On the other hand, a ranger's skill with a bow does help her cut a rope with an arrow, so that's an example of a situation where you might use an attack to resolve an attempt to damage an object.

Plain ability checks are fairly uncommon in the game. Most of the time, you'll find that a skill covers whatever actions the characters in your game attempt.

MAKING CHECKS

All checks in the game use the same core mechanic: Roll a d20, add any modifiers, and compare the check result against a target number.

For ability checks and skill checks, the target number is the Difficulty Class (DC) of the task being attempted. For attacks, the target number is the defense (Armor Class, Fortitude, Reflex, or Will) of the creature or object being attacked.

Each kind of check uses the same calculation:

d20 + one-half level + relevant ability score modifier + all other modifiers

Modifiers are any numbers that improve or worsen a check result. Bonuses are positive modifiers, while penalties are negative ones. Most checks in the game add additional modifiers, including such factors as bonuses from magic items and penalties from terrain effects.

Skills and Abilities Use these general descriptions of the abilities and skills in the game to help you decide what kind of check governs a task.

Strength: Strength measures a creature's physical power. Use a Strength check for any attempt to lift, push or pull, or break something.

The **Athletics** skill is based on Strength. Use an Athletics check when an adventurer tries to climb, jump, swim, or perform a similar feat of physical power.

Constitution: Constitution represents a creature's health, stamina, and vital force. Constitution checks are rare—you'll find more use for Endurance checks.

The **Endurance** skill is based on Constitution. Use an Endurance check when a character tries to stave off the physical effects of disease or resist extreme environmental effects, or somehow pushes beyond normal physical limits.

Dexterity: Dexterity represents a creature's hand-eye coordination, agility, reflexes, and balance. Dexterity checks are also rare. Use Acrobatics or Thievery for most tests of balance, agility, and hand-eye coordination.

The Acrobatics, Stealth, and Thievery skills are based on Dexterity.

Use an **Acrobatics** check when a character attempts some feat of agility, tries to escape from restraints, or needs to maintain balance on a narrow or slippery surface.

Use a **Stealth** check any time a character is trying to move around while avoiding notice, staying out of sight and moving quietly.

Use a **Thievery** check when a character tries to pick pockets or open locks, to disable traps, or perform other feats of sleight of hand or fine manipulation.

Intelligence: Intelligence measures how well a creature learns and reasons.

Intelligence-based skills reflect specific areas of study, but you can use an Intelligence check as an excuse to give the players a clue—either to see whether the character remembers some important piece of information that the player has forgotten, or to get a bit of insight into a puzzle the characters are trying to solve.

The Arcana, History, and Religion skills are based on Intelligence.

Use an **Arcana** check when a character tries to interact with a magical effect in the world or to recall some knowledge about elemental, fey, or shadow creatures. The Arcana skill encompasses knowledge about all kinds of magic and how it operates.

Use a **History** check when a character tries to recall some useful historical information or recognize a clue based on historical knowledge.

Use a **Religion** check when a character tries to draw on knowledge about gods, religious traditions and ceremonies, divine effects, holy symbols, or theology. The skill also covers knowledge of immortal and undead creatures, as well as the Astral Sea with its dominions.

Wisdom: Wisdom measures a creature's common sense, perception, self-discipline, and empathy. You might use a Wisdom check for a test of a character's intuition, but the Perception and Insight skills cover many such situations.

The Dungeoneering, Heal, Insight, Nature, and Perception skills are based on Wisdom.

Use a **Dungeoneering** check when a character tries to find a path through winding caverns, determine the cardinal directions underground, recognize a dungeon hazard or aberrant monster, or forage for food in the Underdark. The skill represents both knowledge and concrete survival skills.

Use a **Heal** check when a character tries to perform first aid, stabilize a dying ally, treat disease, or examine a corpse.

Use an **Insight** check when a character tries to read another person's intentions or get a feel for a situation.

Use a **Nature** check when a character tries to navigate the wilderness, recognize hazards of the wild or natural creatures, or live off the land while traveling outdoors. Like Dungeoneering, this skill represents knowledge as well as survival skills.

Use a **Perception** check any time a character tries to detect something using one of the five senses: when searching for traps or secret doors, following tracks, listening for sounds behind a closed door, locating an invisible creature by sound or smell, and so on.

Charisma: Charisma measures a creature's force of personality, persuasiveness, and leadership. You might use a Charisma check to measure a character's first impression on an NPC, but more prolonged interactions usually rely on a Charisma-based skill check.

The Bluff, Diplomacy, Intimidate, and Streetwise skills are based on Charisma.

Use a **Bluff** check when a character tries to deceive other people or monsters, whether the character is trying to feint in combat or tell a convincing lie.

Use a **Diplomacy** check when a character tries to change opinions, to inspire good will, to haggle with a patron, to demonstrate proper etiquette and decorum, or to negotiate a deal in good faith.

Use an **Intimidate** check when a character tries to influence others through hostile actions, overt threats, or deadly persuasion.

Use a **Streetwise** check when a character tries to get by in civilization: to make contacts, gather rumors and information, find supplies, or avoid dangerous neighborhoods.

How Hard a Check?

Once you've decided what kind of check covers the action a character is attempting, your next step is to determine how hard it is—which is to say, to set the target number for the check.

In order to keep the game challenging and fun at every level, you should set a DC that's appropriate for the level of the characters, using the Difficulty Class by Level table. Decide whether you think the task should be Easy, Hard, or somewhere in between for the characters, and use the DC from the appropriate column of the table.

However, don't throw all sense of realism out the window. If a simple wooden door in a dungeon, stuck from years of disuse, requires a DC 10 Strength check for a 4th-level character to break down, there's no logical reason the same door should require a DC 21 Strength check for a 24th-level character to break through. When characters have reached 24th level, they don't need to worry about simple wooden doors stuck shut in dungeons. They can either blow through such doors with ease, or you can present them with barred adamantine doors that do require DC 21 Strength checks.

Similarly, you're within your rights to simply declare that what the character hopes to accomplish is impossible, or at least impossible for the character. Use your common sense, while remembering that this is a game of heroic fantasy, where characters—especially at high levels—can achieve the impossible.

A character is expected to be able to meet at least one of the three DCs of his or her level and to do so 65 percent of the time, depending on skill training, ability scores, and bonuses. The following definitions guide you in determining which of the three DCs is appropriate for a particular check.

AID ANOTHER

In some situations, characters can work together to use a skill or an ability; characters can help a single character make a skill or an ability check by making a check themselves. Doing so is called taking the aid another action. Given a choice, a group should have the character who has the highest skill or ability check bonus take the lead, while the other characters cooperate to provide assistance.

To take the aid another action, an assisting character chooses an adjacent ally and then uses a standard action to make a skill check or an ability check with a DC equal to $10 + \text{one-half the character's level}$. If the check succeeds, the chosen ally gains a +2 bonus to the next check using the same skill or ability before the end of the assisting character's next turn. If the check fails, the chosen ally takes a -1 penalty to that check. The penalty represents the distraction caused by the failed assistance.

A character can take the aid another action only once to affect a particular check. However, up to four characters can take the aid another action to affect the check.

GROUP CHECKS

You can ask for a group skill check in any situation where the entire party of adventurers is trying to accomplish something as a group. In these situations, the characters who are skilled at a particular task help cover those who aren't. Everyone in the group makes a check (usually against an easy DC), and if at least half the group succeeds, the group as a whole succeeds.

Use group skill checks when the party tries to sneak past some sentries (using Stealth), tries to scale a sheer cliff (using Athletics), or tries to pass as a group of orc soldiers (using disguises and the Bluff skill). In more complex situations, a skill challenge (page 224) provides a more satisfying and suspenseful experience.

Easy: An easy DC is a reasonable challenge for characters who are not trained in a particular skill. Such characters have about a 65 percent chance of meeting an easy DC of their level. An easy DC is truly easy for a character who is trained in the skill and is usually a guaranteed success for a character who has mastered it. This is the standard DC for an ability check, or for a skill check that every member of an adventuring group is expected to make, particularly when no one is expected to be trained in the skill. Easy DCs are also often used for group checks in skill challenges.

Moderate: A moderate DC is a reasonable challenge for characters who are trained in a particular skill as well as for characters who aren't trained but have a high score (18 or higher) in the skill's key ability. Such characters have about a 65 percent chance of meeting a moderate DC of their level. This is the standard DC for a skill check that a single character makes in a skill challenge.

Hard: A hard DC is a reasonable challenge for characters who are not only trained in a particular skill but who also have a high score (18 or higher) in the skill's key ability. Such characters have about a 65 percent chance of meeting a hard DC of their level. This is the standard DC for a skill check that only an expert is expected to pass consistently.

Opposed Checks: Sometimes, a skill check serves as a test of one character's skill in one area against another character's skill in the same area or in a different one. A Stealth check, for example, is a test of the character's ability to hide against someone else's ability to spot hidden things (the Perception skill). These skill contests are called opposed checks. In an opposed check, both characters roll, and the higher check result wins. If there's a tie, the character with the higher check modifier wins. If it's still a tie, both sides roll again to break the tie.

DIFFICULTY CLASS BY LEVEL

Character Level	Easy DC	Moderate DC	Hard DC
1	8	12	19
2	9	13	20
3	9	13	21
4	10	14	21
5	10	15	22
6	11	15	23
7	11	16	23
8	12	16	24
9	12	17	25
10	13	18	26
11	13	19	27
12	14	20	28
13	14	20	29
14	15	21	29
15	15	22	30

Character Level	Easy DC	Moderate DC	Hard DC
16	16	22	31
17	16	23	31
18	17	23	32
19	17	24	33
20	18	25	34
21	19	26	35
22	20	27	36
23	20	27	37
24	21	28	37
25	21	29	38
26	22	29	39
27	22	30	39
28	23	30	40
29	23	31	41
30	24	32	42

What's the Result?

Most of the time, the result of a successful check is pretty easy to determine: the character succeeds at whatever he or she set out to accomplish, within reason. It's usually equally easy to figure out what happens when a character fails a check: the character simply doesn't succeed.

You can use the difference between the check result and the DC to measure degrees of success or failure, if that becomes important. For example, when a character is trying to walk across a tightrope, there's a very significant difference between failing to make progress across the tightrope and falling. A good rule of thumb in a situation like that is that if the character fails the check by 5 or more, he or she suffers a more catastrophic result. You can use that guideline for Acrobatics checks, for Athletics checks made to climb or swim, for Thievery checks made to disarm a trap (where the catastrophic result is setting off the trap) or pick a pocket (the target notices your attempt), and in any other situation where it seems appropriate.

Similarly, if a character beats a DC by 5 or more, you might decide that's an especially successful check, particularly if the DC was already hard. Maybe the character who is using Diplomacy to win the baron's favor is so successful that the baron grants the characters a small boon or invites them to a feast. Or a character using Thievery to disable a trap manages to set it so it will still trigger for the enemies pursuing the characters through the dungeon!

DAMAGE BY LEVEL

Character Level	Single Target	Two or More Targets	Character Level	Single Target	Two or More Targets
1	1d8 + 4	1d6 + 3	16	3d8 + 11	3d6 + 8
2	1d8 + 5	1d6 + 4	17	3d8 + 12	3d6 + 9
3	1d8 + 6	1d6 + 5	18	3d8 + 13	3d6 + 9
4	2d6 + 5	1d8 + 5	19	3d8 + 14	3d6 + 10
5	2d6 + 6	1d8 + 6	20	3d8 + 15	3d6 + 11
6	2d6 + 7	1d8 + 6	21	4d6 + 15	3d8 + 9
7	2d8 + 6	2d6 + 4	22	4d6 + 16	3d8 + 9
8	2d8 + 7	2d6 + 5	23	4d6 + 17	3d8 + 10
9	2d8 + 8	2d6 + 6	24	4d6 + 18	3d8 + 11
10	2d8 + 9	2d6 + 6	25	4d6 + 19	3d8 + 12
11	3d6 + 9	2d6 + 7	26	4d8 + 16	4d6 + 11
12	3d6 + 10	2d8 + 6	27	4d8 + 17	4d6 + 12
13	3d6 + 11	2d8 + 7	28	4d8 + 18	4d6 + 13
14	3d6 + 12	2d8 + 7	29	4d8 + 19	4d6 + 14
15	3d6 + 13	2d8 + 8	30	4d8 + 20	4d6 + 15

Damage: Sometimes the result of a successful check—even one that’s not an attack—might include damage that’s not specified in a power or a published adventure. Sometimes, too, you need to set damage for something not covered in the rules—a character stumbles into the campfire or falls into a vat of acid, for example. In these situations, choose a column on the Damage by Level table based on the characters’ level and the severity of the effect. Use the first column for an effect that hurts one creature at a time, and the second column for an effect that harms multiple creatures.

Example

Hurrying through a network of caves with orcs in hot pursuit, Gardain the dwarf (an 8th-level rogue) wants to collapse the tunnel behind the party. You’re willing to let him try, so ask the three key questions.

What kind of check is this? This seems like a case where knowledge of the underground environment would come in handy, so you call for a Dungeoneering check.

How hard is it? This is a significant task, not something that just anyone could pull off. It’s definitely a hard DC. Checking the Difficulty Class by Level table yields a DC of 24.

What’s the result? If Gardain makes his Dungeoneering check, he manages to cause a cave-in that blocks the tunnel behind. If he fails, there’s no cave-in, or it doesn’t completely block the passage. If you want to, you could rule that if

he fails by 5 or more, he buries himself and the rest of his party in the cave-in, dealing 2d6 + 5 damage to the group. Similarly, if he succeeds by 5 or more, he could delay the cave-in so he traps the pursuing orcs beneath a pile of rubble!

IMPROVISING

No matter how carefully you prepare for a gaming session, eventually the players do something unexpected, and you have to wing it. Relax. A lot of DMs feel a lot of anxiety about being caught unprepared, and they overprepare as a result, creating tons of material they never have a chance to use.

With a little bit of focused preparation, some familiarity with basic improvisation techniques, and a lot of flexibility, you can handle any curve ball your players throw at you. You might even be surprised to realize that the game is better than it would have been if it had stuck to your original script.

Improvisational Aids

When you have some extra time in your game preparation, spend it preparing some tools you can use to help you improvise when the need arises.

Lists of Names: The names in the race entries in *Heroes of the Fallen Lands* and *Heroes of the Forgotten Kingdoms* are a good starting point of lists of names. Time you spend putting together such lists (organized by at least gender and race) pays off when you have to create an NPC on the spur of the moment. You can use baby-naming books or search the Internet for multiple resources for fantasy-flavored names.

Encounters for Every Taste: Keeping the particular tastes of your players in mind, design modular encounters crafted to appeal to their interests. Put together groups of monsters or thugs who could kick in the door and attack at a moment's notice, and tinker with skill challenges you can use as the foundation for encounters in your campaign. Once you've designed them, you can use these encounters to keep things moving when the players make an unexpected decision or pick a surprising route, or to make sure that all your players are staying interested in the game.

Mini-Dungeons: Keep a small supply of encounter area maps on hand—not just little dungeons (a ruined mill house with its cellars, a jailhouse, or a cave behind a waterfall), but also unusual wilderness and urban areas. Combined with the encounters you design, these maps can provide a whole session of adventure if things go awry or you just run out of time to prepare one week.

Don't forget that you can carve up larger published adventures into their component encounters and loot them. Or rotate an older encounter map to a different orientation and change the names in a pinch. *D&D Insider* provides many short dungeons and encounters you can also use on short notice.

Campaign Lists: Keep track of what's going on in your campaign. Keep the story of the adventure and the whole campaign in mind, and keep a list of things that can happen to drive the story forward. If the adventurers decide to wander off to an unexpected place and you end up using one of your prepared maps and some random encounters, pull something off your campaign list to tie the whole excursion into the broader story. This one element tied to the ongoing story makes the players think you had the whole thing planned from the start, no matter how random the encounters seemed!

Saying Yes One of the cornerstones of improvisational theater technique is called “Yes, and . . .” It's based on the idea that an actor takes whatever the other actor gives and builds on that.

That's your job as well. As often as possible, take what the players give you and build on it. If they do something unexpected, run with it. Take it and weave it back into your story without railroading them into a fixed plotline.

For example, the adventurers are searching for a lich who has been sending wave after wave of minions at them. One of the players asks if the town they are in has a guild of wizards or some other place where wizards might gather. The reasoning goes that such a place would have records or histories that mention this lich's activities in the past, when the lich was still a living wizard. That wasn't a possibility you'd anticipated, and you don't have anything prepared for it.

Many DMs, at this point, would say, “No, there's no wizards' guild here.”

What a loss! The players end up frustrated, trying to come up with some other course of action. Even worse, you've set limits to your own campaign. You've decided that this particular town has no association of wizards, which could serve as a great adventure hook later in your campaign.

When you say yes, you open more possibilities. Imagine you say there is a wizards' guild. You can select wizards' names from your prepared lists. You could pull together a skill challenge you have half-prepared and set it up as the encounter that the adventurers need to overcome in order to gain access to the wizards' records. You could use a mini-dungeon map to depict the wizards' library if the characters decide to sneak in, and then scrape together an encounter with a golem or some other guardian. Take a look at your campaign lists, think about what would help the adventurers find the lich, and tell the players they find that information after much digging through the wizards' records.

Instead of cutting off possibilities, you've made your campaign richer, and instead of frustrating your players, you've rewarded them for thinking in creative and unexpected ways. Make a note of the things you just invented about this wizards' cabal (adding them to your campaign lists), and use the cabal again later in your campaign. Everyone's happy!



TROUBLESHOOTING

Sometimes your game group, your adventure, or your campaign runs into problems. Remember that gamers play to have fun, and that they're human beings before they are gamers. They have real-life needs and motivations that can affect the game. The best things you can do are remain calm, be fair, and listen and respond to what the players have to say when there are problems.

Character Death

Adventures involve risk by definition. With every encounter, the characters can fail. In the case of a combat encounter, one cost of failure is the chance of death—of a single character or an entire group.

Players get attached to their characters. That's natural. A character represents an investment of a lot of time at the table, and a big emotional investment as well. The biggest problem resulting from character death is hard feelings.

The best way to avoid hard feelings connected to character death is to be fair and to make sure the players know you're being fair. Rolling dice in front of them helps that perception. The players know that you're not cheating in the monsters' favor, or singling out a single character for punishment.

Don't ever punish a character for a player's behavior or some personal grudge. That's probably the quickest way to undermine your players' trust in you as DM and as a fair arbiter of the rules. Let characters face the consequences of their stupid actions, but make sure you give enough cues for the players to recognize stupid actions and to give the players every opportunity to take back rash decisions.

Your players also have to know that you're fair in designing encounters and are not stacking the odds against them from the beginning. It's fine to throw tough encounters at them and sometimes to let them face monsters they can't beat. But it's not fair if the players have no way to know they can't win the fight or have no way to escape. Scare them, but don't trap them.

When a character does die, it's usually up to the players as a group to decide what happens. Some players are perfectly happy to roll up a new character, especially when they're eager to try out new options. Don't penalize a new character in the group. The new member should start at the same level as the rest of the party and have similar gear.

If the characters have gained at least a few levels, the death of a character is the loss of a significant investment of time and energy. Fortunately, dead characters can be brought back to life. The most common way is through the cleric's *resurrection* power. For some characters, death can be little more than a speed bump, but the consequences of failure can be much worse than death.

Fixing Your Mistakes

It's going to happen sometimes: You make mistakes. That doesn't make you a bad Dungeon Master. It means you're human. What matters most is how you deal with those mistakes.

Bad Rules Call You do not have to have a perfect mastery of the rules, and you should be open to at least some discussion of the right way to apply a rule in any situation. But you also want to keep the game moving, which means that at some point you have to cut off discussion. When you do, tell one of the players to make a note of the issue and how you resolved it, and reopen the discussion at the end of the encounter or the end of the session.

If you realize you made a mistake, admit it. Then, if you need to, make it up to the players. If your mistake had a significant effect on the outcome of the encounter, do what it takes to correct for your mistake. You can give the characters a little more experience or a little more treasure, or you can resolve the issue within the context of the adventure. Maybe that goblin didn't escape to warn the ogres after all.

Encounter Too Hard It can be hard to judge ahead of time just how tough an encounter is. Throwing a 13th-level monster at a 9th-level party is often fine, but if the creature has regeneration that negates all the damage the characters do to it, they will be hard pressed to survive that fight.

If you see the characters obviously overwhelmed in an encounter, you can:

- ◆ give the characters an escape route;
- ◆ make intentionally bad choices for the monsters;
- ◆ “forget” to roll to see if monsters recharge their powers;
- ◆ come up with a story reason for the monsters to leave the fight; or
- ◆ let the monsters win, but leave the characters alive for some reason.

If you let the characters beat an encounter that was too hard for them, don't give them full experience for that encounter because it wasn't as challenging as its level indicates. Reduce the XP award by about a level's worth.

Encounter Too Easy Usually, this isn't a problem—the characters just get a little break. However, if the adventure assumes that the encounter is hard (for example, you need the villain to escape but the players figure out a way to prevent that), you can step up the difficulty as you go. Bring in reinforcements. Give the villain a new capability the players didn't know about.



COMBAT ENCOUNTERS

Stripped to the very basics, the *DUNGEONS & DRAGONS* game is a series of encounters. Encounters are where the game happens—where the capabilities of the adventurers are put to the test and success or failure hang in the balance. An encounter is a single scene in an ongoing drama, when the player characters come up against something that impedes their progress. This chapter talks you through running combat encounters, whether they're encounters from a published adventure or encounters you've designed yourself.

Whether you're running a pitched battle in a courtyard, a tense negotiation that collapses into a duel, a pulse-pounding attempt to scale a cliff while harpies attack, or a dangerous run down a trap-filled passage, don't forget everything you learned in the last chapter. It's never just a combat encounter; it's a life-or-death struggle between heroic adventurers and horrific monsters. It's not just the exchange of numbers and the strategy of moving pieces around on a board—it's a test of the adventurers' skill and mettle against terrible odds. Keep the pace fast, the narration vivid, and the players enthralled!

... a life-or-death struggle between heroic adventurers and horrific monsters.

THE COMBAT SEQUENCE

A typical combat encounter is a clash between two sides, a flurry of weapon swings, feints, parries, footwork, and spellcasting. The *DUNGEONS & DRAGONS* game organizes the chaos of combat into a cycle of rounds and turns.

The actions in a combat encounter happen almost simultaneously in the game world, but to make combat manageable, creatures take turns. If a character's turn comes up before an enemy's, that character's actions take place before the enemy's actions do. The order of turns is determined at the beginning of a combat encounter, when everyone rolls initiative.

RULES OF THE GAME

This chapter presents the basics of running combat for the *DUNGEONS & DRAGONS* roleplaying game. You can run exciting and intricate combat encounters using these rules. For an expanded version of the rules that contains additional options, as well as in-depth commentary on the rules, check out the *Rules Compendium*.

KEY TERMS

The rules for the combat sequence rely on several key terms.

round: A round represents about 6 seconds in the game world. In a round, every combatant takes a turn.

turn: On a creature's turn, it takes actions: a standard action, a move action, a minor action, and any number of free actions, in any order it wishes. See "Action Types," page 118, for what can be done with these different actions.

once per turn: Some things can occur only once per turn. If a creature can use an effect, such as a class feature, only once per turn, that effect can be used no more than once during each turn in a round, and not only during the creature's turn.

once per round: Some benefits are usable only once per round. When a creature uses such a benefit, it can't be used again until the start of the creature's next turn.

A combat encounter follows these steps.

- 1. Determine surprise.** You determine whether anyone involved in the combat encounter is surprised. If any creatures notice enemies without being noticed in return, the aware creatures gain a surprise round (see "The Surprise Round," below).
- 2. Establish positions.** You decide where the creatures are positioned on the battle grid. Then you place miniatures or tokens that represent the adventurers and the monsters on the grid.
- 3. Roll initiative.** Everyone involved in a combat encounter rolls initiative at the start of the encounter, determining the order of combatants' turns.
- 4. Take surprise round actions.** If any creatures gained a surprise round, they act in initiative order, each taking a single action. (Surprised creatures take no actions during the surprise round.) The surprise round then ends, and the first regular round of combat begins.
- 5. Take turns.** In initiative order from highest to lowest, every combatant takes a turn, which includes various actions. (Creatures can also take certain actions on one another's turns.)
- 6. Begin the next round.** When everyone involved in the combat has had a turn, the round ends.
- 7. End the encounter.** Repeat steps 5 and 6 until one side stops fighting—for example, all the monsters are captured, fleeing, unconscious, or dead.

The Surprise Round

Some combat encounters begin with a surprise round, which occurs if any creatures are caught completely off guard at the start of battle. If even one creature is surprised, there is a surprise round, and all creatures that aren't surprised act in initiative order during that round. Surprised creatures can't act at all during the surprise round.

Limited Action: If a creature is not surprised, it can take only one of the following actions on its turn during the surprise round: a standard action, a move action, or a minor action. The creature can also take free actions, but it cannot spend an action point. During that round, the creature can take an immediate action as well as opportunity actions. See "Action Types" below for definitions of these terms.

After every creature that is not surprised has acted, the surprise round ends, and creatures can act normally in subsequent rounds.

Surprised: If a creature is surprised (page 151), it can't take any actions during the surprise round. The creature also grants combat advantage (page 140). As soon as the surprise round ends, the creature is no longer surprised.

Determining Surprise Determining surprise is usually straightforward. If one side in a battle notices the other side without being noticed in return, it has the advantage of surprise.

In many situations, surprise is extremely unlikely. Two groups traveling an open road or blundering through the woods notice each other, with no need for Perception checks of any kind. Neither group surprises the other.

Hiding Creatures: Surprise can happen when creatures are actively hiding. A group that is actively trying to avoid detection might surprise its foes. In such a situation, have each group member make a Stealth check. Alternatively, the group member who has the lowest Stealth modifier might have to make one check for the entire group (see "Group Checks," page 106). Compare the check result, or results, to the passive Perception of any creature that might notice the group. Creatures that fail to notice the group are surprised if the group attacks.

Blocked Vision: Objects or circumstances that block vision can contribute to an attempt to achieve surprise. Blocked vision provides an opportunity for creatures to make Stealth checks to try to become hidden. Simply being out of sight doesn't make a creature hidden. Surprise is rare without some attempt at stealth. Creatures that want to achieve surprise in heavy fog or similar conditions must make an effort to be quiet and stay out of sight, making Stealth checks.

A door not only blocks sight but muffles sound, making it easier for characters to get close to their foes without being detected. The adventurers can't

be surprised when they open a door prepared for a fight. They can listen at the door to get some idea of what they'll be facing, but the monsters won't get the jump on them. It's a different matter if the monsters in the room are hidden, so the characters burst in and don't see a threat until the monsters spring their ambush.

It's similarly rare for monsters to be surprised when the adventurers have to open a door to get to them. If the characters are trying to be quiet, and the monsters aren't wary of intruders, you can use a group Stealth check compared to the monsters' passive Perception. Otherwise, assume that the monsters hear the sounds of movement outside the door.

Initiative

Whether it's when negotiations with the duke break down or the instant the goblins spring their ambush, rolling initiative marks the start of a combat encounter. Initiative checks determine the turn order in combat—who goes first each round.

Every monster statistics block in the *Monster Vault* or a published adventure includes the creature's initiative modifier, and characters have their own initiative modifiers. Each player character rolls initiative separately, but don't give the monsters the same luxury. Roll once for each kind of monster in the encounter. For example, in an encounter with one orc storm shaman, two orc rampagers, two orc reavers, and six orc savages, make one initiative roll for each of the four kinds. All the orc warriors act at once, all the orc raiders go together, and so on.

Write down each creature's initiative result, in order from highest to lowest. Then combat can begin, starting with the highest initiative result. When you get to the bottom of the list, start again at the top and repeat until the fight is over.

Individual monsters can delay and ready actions (see pages 157 and 159), so it's possible you'll end up with the two orc reavers acting at different times by the time the encounter is over.

ACTION TYPES

A combat round is made up of actions. Firing an arrow, casting a spell, running across a room, opening a door—each of these activities is an action. Most attack powers are standard actions, and moving from one spot on the battlefield to another is normally a move action. Actions help organize what creatures do during a battle. Each creature can take only so many actions at a time.

After reading this section, see "Actions in Combat," page 151, for more about actions and game terms used here.

The Main Action Types

A typical turn includes at least one each of three actions, if not all three: a standard action, a move action, and a minor action. Unless a power or other effect says otherwise, a creature can take these types of actions only on its turn.

Standard Action: A standard action requires more effort than any other type and is usually the main action of a creature's turn. *Examples:* Most attack powers, using one's second wind, administering first aid to an ally.

Move Action: Move actions involve movement from one place to another. *Examples:* Walking, running, shifting.

Minor Action: As the name implies, minor actions are simple. *Examples:* Pulling an item from a sheath, opening a door or a chest, picking up an item.

Free Actions

Free actions take almost no time or effort. A creature can take as many free actions as it wants during any turn, including other creatures' turns. An exception to this rule: Sometimes a creature has the ability to use an attack power as a free action; the creature can take a free action to use an attack power only once per turn. *Examples:* Speaking a few sentences, dropping a held item, letting go of a grabbed creature.

Triggered Actions

A triggered action is any action that can be taken only when a specific trigger occurs. A trigger is an action, an event, or an effect that allows the use of a triggered action.

Two action types—immediate actions and opportunity actions—always have triggers. Free actions sometimes have triggers as well, as do some powers and effects that require no action at all. Whatever the type of action (or non-action), if it has a trigger, it cannot be used unless the trigger occurs.

Immediate Actions There are two kinds of immediate actions: interrupts and reactions. The following rules govern both kinds of immediate action.

Trigger: Each immediate action—usually a power—defines its specific trigger. The one type of immediate action that every creature can take is a readied action (see “Ready an Action,” page 159).

Someone Else's Turn: A creature cannot take an immediate action on its own turn. The action interrupts something on another creature's turn or responds to that thing.

Once per Round: A creature can take only one immediate action per round, either an immediate interrupt or an immediate reaction. Therefore, if a creature takes an immediate action, it can't take another one until the start of its next turn.

Interrupts An immediate interrupt “jumps in” when its trigger occurs, taking place before the trigger finishes. If an interrupt invalidates a triggering action, the triggering action is lost. For example, an immediate interrupt that is triggered by an enemy hit might give a creature a bonus to defenses, which might turn the hit into a miss.

Reactions An immediate reaction lets a creature act in response to a trigger. The triggering action or event occurs and is completely resolved before the reaction takes place. For example, if a power lets a creature move as an immediate reaction after being hit by an attack, the creature still takes the hit but acts before the attacker can take any further actions on its turn.

Opportunity Actions

An opportunity action is very similar to an immediate interrupt, but it can be taken once per turn, rather than once per round.

Trigger: Each opportunity action—usually a power—defines its specific trigger. The one type of opportunity action that every creature can take is an opportunity attack (page 159).

Someone Else's Turn: A creature cannot take an opportunity action on its own turn. The action interrupts something on another creature's turn.

Once per Turn: A creature can take no more than one opportunity action per turn.

Interrupt: Just like an immediate interrupt, an opportunity action interrupts its trigger, taking place before the trigger finishes.

Other Triggered Effects

If an effect has a trigger but is neither an immediate action nor an opportunity action, assume that it behaves like an immediate reaction, waiting for its trigger to completely resolve. However, ignore this guideline when the effect has to interrupt its trigger to function. For example, if a triggered power allows an adventurer to use a free action to reroll an attack roll, with the hope of turning a miss into a hit, the power must interrupt the trigger (“You miss with an attack”) to function; otherwise the attack would be resolved as a miss.

THE STRUCTURE OF A TURN

When a creature's turn comes up in the initiative order, it can do things. A creature's turn has three parts: the start of the turn; the actions of the turn, if any; and the end of the turn. Of course, if a creature is destroyed, it has no turns!

The Start of a Turn

Each creature has a start of each turn: a phase that takes no time in the game world but is used to keep track of certain effects. The start of a creature's turn always takes place, even if the creature is unable to act.

- ◆ **No Actions:** A creature can't take any actions at the start of its turn.
- ◆ **Ongoing Damage:** If a creature is affected by ongoing damage (page 146), it takes the damage now.
- ◆ **Regeneration:** A creature that has regeneration (page 165) regains hit points now.
- ◆ **End Effects:** Some effects end now ("at the start of your next turn").
- ◆ **Any Order:** The creature can choose the order in which the above things happen at the start of its turn.



The Actions of a Turn

During a creature's turn, the creature can take a few actions. You decide what to do with its actions, considering how they can help create an exciting scene.

- ◆ **Three Main Actions:** A creature gets the following three actions on its turn: a standard action, a move action, and a minor action. See “Actions in Combat,” page 151.
One kind of action can be traded for a simpler one. A move action or a minor action can be taken in place of a standard action, and a minor action can be taken in place of a move action.
- ◆ **Free Actions:** A creature can take any number of free actions (page 119) on its turn.
- ◆ **Any Order:** A creature can take actions in any order and skip any of them.
- ◆ **Action Points:** If a creature has any action points, it can take an extra action on its turn by spending an action point as a free action.

The End of a Turn

Each creature has an end of each turn: a phase that takes no time in the game world but is used to keep track of certain effects. The end of a creature's turn always takes place, even if the creature is unable to act.

- ◆ **No Actions:** A creature can't take any actions at the end of its turn.
- ◆ **Saving Throws:** A creature now makes a saving throw (page 148) against each effect on it that a save can end.
- ◆ **End Effects:** Some effects end now (“at the end of your next turn”).
- ◆ **Any Order:** The creature can choose the order in which the above things happen at the end of its turn.

Actions on Other Turns

A creature can take free actions on anyone's turn, and an event or another combatant's actions might provide an opportunity to take an immediate action or an opportunity action on someone else's turn.

MOVEMENT, DISTANCE, AND TERRAIN

In a battle, adventurers and monsters are in constant motion. Creatures can gain the edge in battle by using movement and position to their advantage.

Creatures use actions to reposition themselves, and they sometimes force other creatures to move. Terrain affects where a creature can move and how quickly it can get there. A creature takes up a space based on its size.

Creature Size and Space

Each creature falls into one of six size categories. A creature's size determines its space and affects its reach.

Size	Space	Reach
Tiny	1/2 × 1/2	0
Small	1 × 1	1
Medium	1 × 1	1
Large	2 × 2	1 or 2
Huge	3 × 3	2 or 3
Gargantuan	4 × 4 or larger	3 or 4

Space: A creature's space is the area in squares that the creature occupies on the battle grid. This area represents the space that the creature needs to take part in an encounter, allowing it to turn around, attack, fall prone, and so on.

Reach: A creature's size affects its reach, which is also measured in squares. A creature's reach influences several things in the game, such as the range of its melee attacks without a weapon and how far away the creature can touch or grab something. A creature's powers specify their range and whether the creature's reach comes into play. An adventurer's melee attacks usually rely more on a weapon's reach than on his or her own reach.

Facing: A creature that is taking part in an encounter is assumed to be in constant motion. You never have to keep track of which direction a creature is facing.

The Size Categories

Tiny: Four individual Tiny creatures can fit in a square, and a Tiny creature can enter a larger creature's space and end its turn there. Having a reach of 0 means a Tiny creature cannot make melee attacks against targets outside its own space, unless noted otherwise. *Examples:* Imps, mundane animals such as cats and crows.

Small: Small creatures occupy the same space as Medium creatures. *Examples:* Gnomes, goblins, halflings.

Medium: This is the size of a typical human and serves as a standard in the game. This category has no special rules. *Examples:* Humans, dwarves, elves, orcs.

Large, Huge, and Gargantuan: Creatures larger than Medium take up more than 1 square. For example, an ogre takes up a space that is 2 squares by 2 squares. Most Large and larger creatures also have a reach greater than 1, which means they can make melee attacks against creatures that aren't adjacent to them. A creature's basic body shape usually determines its reach; a Large ogre has a reach of 2, but a Large horse has a reach of 1. *Examples:* Dragons, giants, trolls.

KEY TERMS

The rules for movement, range, and terrain rely on several general terms. These terms often appear in powers, feats, and the like.

battle grid: The network of 1-inch squares that represents an encounter area.

enter a square: Move into a square on the battle grid by any means, whether willingly or unwillingly.

filling a square: When something fills a square, that thing functions as blocking terrain (page 127). Unless noted otherwise, a creature or an object such as a chair does not fill its space.

forced movement: Movement that a creature is compelled to do, specifically a pull, a push, or a slide. A creature can be moved in other ways, such as through teleportation, but only pulls, pushes, and slides are technically forced movement.

leave a square: Move out of a square on the battle grid by any means, whether willingly or unwillingly.

move: Any instance of movement, whether it is done willingly or unwillingly. Whenever a creature, an object, or an effect leaves a square to enter another, it is moving. This means shifting, teleporting, and being pushed are all examples of moves.

occupied square: A square occupied by a creature.

position: The location of a creature, an object, or an effect on the battle grid.

size: One of six categories that determines the extent of a creature's space.

space: The square area that a creature occupies or the squares where an object or a phenomenon is located. A typical adventurer's space is a single square.

speed: The distance (in squares) that a creature can move using the walk action.

square: A 1-inch square on the battle grid, which is equivalent to a 5-foot square in the game world. The square is the main unit of measurement in the game.

unoccupied square: A square that is neither occupied by a creature nor filled by an object.

willing movement: Movement of any sort that a creature does of its own free will. Any other sort of movement, such as forced movement, is unwilling.

Determining Distance

Whether a creature wants to dash from one position on the battlefield to another or target a foe with an attack, everyone needs to know how to determine distance between things on the battle grid. Here are the basic rules related to distance.

Adjacent Squares: Two squares are adjacent if a side or a corner of one touches a side or a corner of the other. Two creatures or objects are adjacent if one of them is in a square adjacent to a square occupied by the other.

Counting Distance: When determining how far away one square is from another, start counting from any square adjacent to one of the squares (even one that is diagonally adjacent but around a corner), then count around blocking terrain (page 127) and end up in the other square. Make sure to use the shortest path.

Nearest Creature or Square: Sometimes a creature uses a power or other effect that refers to the nearest creature or square. When two or more creatures or squares are equally close, the creature's player can pick either as the nearest.

Speed

Each creature has a speed measured in squares. This speed represents how far a creature can move using the walk action (although it can choose not to move any distance at all). An adventurer's speed is determined by the adventurer's race and any bonuses and penalties. A monster's speed is noted in its statistics block.

The most common way that a creature moves is by taking a move action, such as the walk or the run action, that is based on its speed. Powers, feats, and other effects also refer to a creature's speed.

Basic Movement Rules

Movement is governed by the following rules, unless noted otherwise.

Diagonal Movement Moving diagonally works the same as other movement, except that a creature can't cross the corner of a wall or another obstacle that fills the corner between the square the creature is in and the square it wants to enter.

Ending a Move A creature must have enough movement to enter its destination space. A creature can't partly enter a square: If it doesn't have enough movement or runs out on the way, its move ends in the last square it could get to.

Occupied Squares A creature occupies all the squares of its space. The rules for moving through occupied squares depend on whether the squares belong to an ally or an enemy.

Ally: A creature can enter an ally's space, but it can end its move in an ally's space only if the ally is prone (page 150).

Enemy: A creature can't enter an enemy's space unless that enemy is helpless (page 150) or two size categories larger or smaller than it. A creature can end its move in an enemy's space only if the enemy is helpless.

Tiny Creatures: A Tiny creature can enter a larger creature's space and end its move there, regardless of whether the larger creature is an ally or enemy.

Prone Creatures: A prone creature that ends up in a square with another creature has two main options for moving out of that square: crawl or stand up (see "Default Move Actions," on the next page).



Double Move A creature can move twice if it takes another move action instead of a standard action. If it takes the same move action twice in a row, it's taking a double move.

Same Move Action Twice: To double move, a creature must take the same move action twice in a row on the same turn.

Combined Speed: During a double move, first add the speeds of the two move actions together. The creature moves using the combined speed.

Because of this greater speed, the creature can sometimes move into a square that it would otherwise be unable to enter. For example, a creature whose speed is 5 can enter only 2 squares of difficult terrain (see "Terrain" below) when it takes a single move action to walk. If it takes a double move by walking twice in a row, it can move a total of 10 squares, so it can enter 5 squares of difficult terrain instead of only 4.

Occupied Squares: During a double move, a creature's first move action can end in an ally's space, since the creature is not stopping. The second move action follows the normal rules for where the creature can end the move.

DEFAULT MOVE ACTIONS

These are the three most common move actions, available to every creature. For more about these actions, see “Actions in Combat,” page 151.

- ◆ **Walk:** A creature uses a move action to move up to its speed.
- ◆ **Shift:** A creature uses a move action to move 1 square (certain powers allow a creature to shift more than 1 square). Shifting doesn’t provoke opportunity actions.
- ◆ **Run:** A creature uses a move action to move its speed plus up to 2 additional squares. As soon as a creature starts running, it grants combat advantage and takes a -5 penalty to attack rolls until the start of its next turn.

Two other common move actions are usable only by creatures that are prone (page 150).

- ◆ **Crawl:** A creature uses a move action to move up to half its speed while it is prone.
- ◆ **Stand Up:** A creature uses a move action to stand up, which ends the prone condition on it.

Terrain and Obstacles

Most battles don’t take place in bare rooms or featureless plains. Adventurers fight monsters across boulder-strewn caverns, in briar-choked forests, and on steep staircases. Each battleground offers its own combination of challenges, such as cover, concealment, and poor footing. Chapter 5 describes various forms of terrain, both mundane and fantastic.

Blocking Terrain Walls, doors, large pillars, and various obstacles that fill squares on the battle grid are blocking terrain, which prevents movement.

Blocks Movement: Creatures can’t enter squares of blocking terrain. A typical square of blocking terrain is completely filled, which prevents diagonal movement across its corners.

No Line of Effect or Line of Sight: Blocking terrain blocks line of effect. It blocks line of sight as well, unless it’s transparent.

Cover: A creature can gain cover by positioning itself near blocking terrain. See “Cover and Concealment,” page 141.

Difficult Terrain Rubble, undergrowth, shallow bogs, steep stairs, low furniture, and many sorts of other impediments are difficult terrain, which hampers movement.

Costs 1 Extra

Square: Each square of difficult terrain costs 1 extra square of movement to enter. Some difficult terrain, such as a low wall, is on

the line between two squares, rather than in the squares themselves. Entering a square by crossing that line costs 1 extra square of movement.

Because difficult terrain costs that extra square of movement to enter, a creature can't normally shift into it. However, if a power or other effect lets a creature shift 2 squares, the creature can shift into a square of difficult terrain.



Hindering Terrain Pits, electrifying runes, lava, extremely deep water, and other harmful environmental phenomena are hindering terrain, which punishes creatures that are in it or try to enter it.

Saving Throw: A creature can make a saving throw to avoid being forced into hindering terrain, whether it is pulled, pushed, slid, teleported, or otherwise moved against its will. See “Forced Movement” and “Teleportation,” discussed later in this section.

Damage: Hindering terrain almost always has the potential to harm creatures that enter it, either by causing them to fall or by dealing damage to them directly. (Some hindering terrain might impose a penalty or harmful condition without dealing damage.)

Falling

Some kinds of terrain present a unique danger: a precipitous drop. When a creature falls at least 10 feet, it is likely to take damage. Most often, a creature falls because of forced movement (page 130).

Falling Damage: A creature takes 1d10 damage for each 10 feet it falls, to a maximum of 50d10. The creature falls prone when it lands, unless it somehow takes no damage from the fall. *Fast Alternative:* If a creature falls more than 50 feet, it takes 25 damage per 50 feet, plus 1d10 damage for each 10 extra feet.

Precipitous Terrain When you design an encounter area, don't put 1st-level adventurers in a fight at the edge of an 80-foot cliff. The 8d10 damage from falling off that cliff would be lethal even to the group's fighter.

The table below classifies falls according to their severity by character level. A painful fall does significant damage to characters of the indicated levels, but shouldn't kill a character who's not yet bloodied. A perilous fall might kill a bloodied character, and could leave even a character at full health bloodied. A deadly fall could kill a fragile character, probably makes a character bloodied, and threatens significant harm to any character.

FALL SEVERITY BY CHARACTER LEVEL

Level	Painful	Perilous	Deadly
1st-5th	20 ft.	30 ft.	40 ft.
6th-10th	30 ft.	50 ft.	70 ft.
11th-15th	40 ft.	70 ft.	110 ft.
16th-20th	60 ft.	90 ft.	140 ft.
21st-25th	80 ft.	110 ft.	170 ft.
26th-30th	90 ft.	130 ft.	200 ft.

Flying

Some creatures have the innate ability to fly, whereas others gain the ability through powers, magic items, and the like.

Fly Speed: To fly, a creature takes the walk, run, or charge action but uses its fly speed in place of its walking speed. A creature that has a fly speed can also shift and take other move actions, as appropriate, while flying.

Moving Up and Down: A flying creature can move straight up, straight down, or diagonally. There is no additional cost for moving up or down.

Falling: If a creature falls while it is flying, it descends the full distance of the fall but is likely to take less damage than a creature that can't fly. Subtract the creature's fly speed (in feet) from the distance of the fall, then figure out falling damage. If the difference is 0 or less, the creature lands without taking damage from the fall. For example, if a red dragon falls when it is 40 feet in the air, subtract its fly speed of 8 (8 squares = 40 feet) from its altitude.

Falling Prone: If a creature falls prone while it is flying, it falls. The creature isn't actually prone until it lands and takes falling damage.

Remaining in the Air: A flying creature does not need to take any particular action to remain aloft; the creature is assumed to be flying as it fights, moves, and takes other actions. However, a flying creature falls the instant it is stunned, unless it can hover.

Hover: A creature that can hover, such as a beholder, can remain in the air even when it is stunned.

Landing: If a creature flies to a surface it can hold onto or rest on, the creature can land safely.

Terrain: Terrain on the ground does not affect a flying creature if the terrain isn't tall enough to reach it. Flying creatures can easily bypass typical difficult terrain on the ground.

Forced Movement

Certain powers and effects allow a creature to move a target forcibly, whether willing or unwilling. There are three kinds of forced movement: pull, push, and slide. Teleporting a creature does not count as forced movement.

- ◆ **Pull:** Pulling a target means that each square of the forced movement must bring the target closer to the creature or effect that is pulling it.
- ◆ **Push:** Pushing a target means that each square of the forced movement must move the target farther away from the creature or effect that is pushing it.
- ◆ **Slide:** Sliding a target can move it in any direction. Sometimes a creature can swap places with a target. Doing so is a special kind of slide; the creature slides the target into its space and then shifts so that its space includes at least 1 square that the target just left.

The following rules govern all three kinds of forced movement. A particular instance of forced movement might contain exceptions to these rules.

Distance, Destination, or Both: The effect that produces forced movement specifies a distance in squares, a destination, or both for the movement.

Any distance specified is a maximum; the effect producing the forced movement can move its target up to that number of squares (or none at all).

When a destination is specified, it is absolute; the creature or effect must either move the target to that destination or not move it at all. Often a destination is combined with a distance, which means the target can be moved to the destination only if it is no farther than the specified distance.

Line of Effect: A creature must have line of effect (page 136) to any square that it pulls, pushes, or slides a target into. Also, the target cannot be forced through blocking terrain.

Ignores Difficult Terrain: Forced movement isn't affected by difficult terrain.

Ignores Speed: A target's speed is irrelevant to the distance it is forced to move, and the target expends none of its own actions for the movement.

Destination Space: The destination of the forced movement must be an unoccupied space that is at least the same size as the target.

No Opportunity Actions Triggered: When a target is pulled, pushed, or slid, it does not trigger opportunity actions, such as opportunity attacks, that are triggered by movement.

Catching Oneself: If a target is forced over a precipice or into hindering terrain (page 128), the target can make a saving throw to avoid going over the edge or entering that terrain. If the creature saves, it falls prone in the last square it occupied before it would have fallen or entered the terrain. Otherwise, it falls over the edge or enters the terrain. Once the saving throw is resolved, the forced movement ends.

Immobilized or Restrained: Being immobilized doesn't prevent a target from being pulled, pushed, or slid, but being restrained (page 150) does.

Forced Movement and Terrain: Certain types of terrain can make forced movement powers more effective. For example, if a white dragon pushes a character over slick ice, you could tell the character to make an Acrobatics check or fall prone.

Phasing

A creature that has phasing ignores difficult terrain, and it can move through blocking terrain, obstacles, and other creatures. The creature follows the normal rules for where it must end its movement (normally an unoccupied space).

Teleportation

Teleportation allows instant movement from one location to another. Typically, a creature teleports by means of a power, such as the wizard spell *dimension door*.

Unless an effect notes otherwise, use the following rules when using a teleportation power on a target.

Instantaneous: When a target is teleported, it disappears and instantaneously appears in the destination that the power's user chooses. The movement is unaffected by intervening creatures, objects, or terrain.

Line of Sight: The user must have line of sight (page 135) to the destination space.

Destination Space: The destination of the teleportation must be an unoccupied space that is at least the same size as the target.

If arriving in the destination space would cause the target to fall or if that space is hindering terrain, the target can make a saving throw. On a save, the teleportation is negated. Otherwise, the target arrives in the destination space.

No Line of Effect Required: Neither the user of the teleportation power nor the target needs line of effect to the destination space.

No Opportunity Actions Triggered: When the target teleports, it doesn't provoke opportunity actions, such as opportunity attacks, that are triggered by movement.

Immobilized or Restrained: Being immobilized or restrained doesn't prevent a target from teleporting. If a target teleports away from a physical restraint, a monster's grasp, or some other immobilizing effect that is located in a specific space, the target is no longer immobilized or restrained. Otherwise, it teleports but is still immobilized or restrained when it reaches the destination space.

USING ATTACK POWERS

DUNGEONS & DRAGONS battles are won through cleverly chosen attacks, able defenses, and luck. On a typical turn, a monster takes a standard action to use an attack power, as does an adventurer.

Every creature has a number of attack powers to choose from. The exact attack powers available to an adventurer depend on the player's choices at character creation, and a monster's attack powers are specified in its statistics block.

Each attack power has a type—melee, ranged, close, or area—that determines how the power interacts with a number of rules in the game (see “Attack and Utility Types,” below). Whatever type of attack power a creature uses, the process for making an attack is almost always the same.

1. Choose an attack power, keeping in mind the rules for its type.
2. Choose targets. Each target must be within the power's range and must be within line of effect. See “Choosing Targets,” page 134, for how to determine whether a creature can be targeted by a power.
3. Make an **attack roll**, rolling a d20 and adding the appropriate bonuses and penalties. (Some attack powers don't include attack rolls. Such powers automatically deal damage, inflict conditions, or harm enemies in some other way.)
4. Compare the attack roll's result to the target's **defense**. The attack power specifies what defense to check. If the result is equal to the specified defense or higher, the power hits the target. Otherwise, it misses. (However, if the d20 shows a 20, the power automatically hits the target, and if it shows a 1, the power automatically misses.)

DEFAULT ATTACK POWERS

Any creature can use the following attack powers, each of which is detailed in “Actions in Combat,” later in this chapter.

- ◆ **Melee Basic Attack:** The attacker makes a simple attack using a melee weapon, which can also be an unarmed strike or an improvised weapon such as a chair.
- ◆ **Ranged Basic Attack:** The attacker makes a simple attack using a ranged weapon, which can also be an improvised weapon such as a mug.
- ◆ **Opportunity Attack:** The attacker takes an opportunity action to make a melee basic attack against an adjacent enemy that moves or uses an area or a ranged power.
- ◆ **Bull Rush:** The attacker tries to push a target back and follow it.
- ◆ **Grab:** The attacker tries to seize a target and immobilize it.

5. When an attack power hits, it usually deals **damage**, and many attack powers produce some other effect: forced movement, a condition, and the like. An attack power’s description specifies what happens on a hit. Most attack powers do nothing on a miss, but some specify an effect, such as half damage, on a miss.
6. If the attack power has more than one target, repeat steps 3 through 5 for each of them.

Attack and Utility Types

Powers in the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS world take many forms. A fighter swings a greatsword at a foe; a ranger looses an arrow at a distant target; a dragon exhales a blast of fire; a wizard creates a burst of lightning; a rogue tumbles through the midst of combat. These examples illustrate the five attack and utility types: melee, ranged, close, area, and personal. These types deal primarily with two areas of the rules: targeting and range.

Melee Power: A melee power usually targets one or more individual creatures within the power’s range. A melee power’s origin square is the space of the power’s user, unless otherwise noted. The range of a melee power is specified in the power: as a number of squares, such as “Melee 1” (an adjacent square); as the reach of the weapon used for the power, expressed as “Melee weapon”; or as far as the user can reach, “Melee touch.” If a melee power has multiple targets and includes attack rolls or damage rolls, those rolls are made separately against each target.

Ranged Power: A ranged power usually targets one or more creatures within its range. A ranged power's origin square is the space of the power's user, unless otherwise noted. The range of a ranged power is specified in the power: as a number of squares, such as "Ranged 10"; as the range of the weapon used for the power, expressed as "Ranged weapon"; or as far as the user can see, "Ranged sight." If a ranged power has multiple targets and includes attack rolls or damage rolls, those rolls are made separately against each target. A ranged power provokes opportunity attacks.

Long Range: If an attacker uses a ranged weapon for an attack and the target is farther away than the weapon's normal range but within its long range, the attacker takes a -2 penalty to the attack roll. The attacker can't make the attack against a target beyond the weapon's long range. A ranged power that doesn't use a weapon has a normal range but no long range.

Close Power: A close power creates an area of effect (usually a blast or a burst) that emanates from the power's user; the power's origin square is the user's space, unless otherwise noted. The size of the area of effect created by a close power is specified in the power as a number of squares, such as "Close burst 10" or "Close blast 5."

If a close power has multiple targets and includes attack rolls or damage rolls, the attack rolls are made separately against each target, but a single damage roll is made against all the targets.

Area Power: An area power creates an area of effect (usually a burst or a wall) that can originate in a distant square. A square within the power's range is the origin square for the area of effect. The size of the area created and the range of an area power are specified in the power as a number of squares, such as "Area burst 2 within 10 squares" or "Area wall 8 within 20 squares."

If an area power has multiple targets and includes attack rolls or damage rolls, the attack rolls are made separately against each target, but a single damage roll is made against all the targets. An area power provokes opportunity attacks.

Personal Power: A personal power typically affects its user only. Examples include creating magic armor on oneself or giving oneself the ability to fly.

Choosing Targets

To use a power on a target, the target must be within the power's range and must not be completely behind a barrier. If a power can target multiple creatures, each of those creatures must be an eligible target.

Creatures, Enemies, and Allies: The most common targets are creatures, enemies, and allies. "Creature" means a creature of any sort, whether or not that creature is an enemy or an ally of a character. "Enemy" means a foe of the character, and "ally" refers to the character's companions in an encounter.

KEY TERMS

The rules in this section rely on some key terms.

line of effect: A clear line from one point to another in an encounter. Unless noted otherwise, there must be line of effect between the origin square of an effect and its intended target for that target to be affected. See “Line of Effect,” page 136, for more about determining line of effect.

origin square: The square where an effect originates. Every power has an origin square. A power’s attack/utility type determines the origin square’s location. Some exceptional powers place the origin square elsewhere.

When a power targets a character’s allies and refers to them as allies, they are free to ignore the power’s effects. In contrast, a character’s allies are treated the same as enemies if they are included as targets of a power that specifically targets creatures, as opposed to allies or enemies.

Range: The first step in choosing targets for a power is to check the power’s range. Range is the distance from the power’s user to a target (or to the power’s origin square). The range of each power is noted in its description.

To determine the range between a power’s user and a target, count the number of squares between them, including at least one square that the target occupies. If a target’s space is larger than 1 square, it is an eligible target as long as any square of its space is within range or within the area of effect of that power.

Seeing and Targeting: Cluttered dungeon chambers, dense forests, or brooding ruins offer plenty of places for creatures to hide. In a battle, figuring out who can see whom is often important.

Line of Sight: To determine whether a creature can see a target, pick a corner of the creature’s space and trace an imaginary line from that corner to any part of the target’s space. The creature can see the target if at least one line doesn’t pass through or touch an object or an effect—such as a wall, a thick curtain, or a cloud of fog—that blocks



the creature's vision. Unless a power says otherwise, an attacker can attack a target that it can't see, but the attacker takes a penalty to attack rolls against that target as long as it remains invisible to it (see "Attack Rolls" below).

Line of Effect: A creature can target something (another creature or an object) if there's an unblocked path between the creature and that thing—that is, if the creature has line of effect to it. If every imaginary line traced from a creature to its target passes through or touches a solid obstacle, the creature doesn't have line of effect to the target.

Fog, darkness, and other types of obscured squares block vision, but they don't block line of effect. If a wizard hurls a ball of fire into a pitch-black room, he or she doesn't have to see targets for the fire to hit them. In contrast, a creature can see through a transparent wall of magical force but doesn't have line of effect through it. A snarling demon can be seen on the other side, but the wall blocks attacks against it.

A creature needs line of effect to intended targets and to any space in which the creature wishes to create an effect.

Targeting Objects

At your discretion, a power that targets one or more creatures can target one or more objects, as long as the number of targets does not exceed the number specified in the power.

For example, a player might want her wizard to attack a door with a thunder power, a spell that normally targets a single creature. If you say yes, she can use the spell against the door but can't use it against the door and another creature, because doing so would exceed the number of targets specified in the power. See "Attacking Objects," page 98, for objects' defenses, hit points, and so forth.

Areas of Effect

Close powers and area powers have one of three areas of effect: a blast, a burst, or a wall.

Blast: A blast fills an area adjacent to its origin square, which is almost always the space of its creator. The area is a specified number of squares on a side. For example, a close blast 3 is a



3-square-by-3-square area adjacent to its creator. The blast must be adjacent to its origin square, which is the space of the blast's creator. The origin square is not affected by the blast. A blast affects a target only if the target is in the blast's area and if there is line of effect from the origin square to the target.

Burst: A burst starts in an origin square and extends in all directions to a specified number of squares from the origin square. For example, a power might create an area burst 2 within 10 squares, which means the power originates in a



square up to 10 squares away from its creator and affects the origin square and every square within 2 squares of it (a 5-square-by-5-square area). A close burst uses the space of the burst's creator as its origin square, while an area burst uses a single square within range as the origin square.

A burst affects a target only if there is line of effect from the burst's origin square to the target. Unless a power description says otherwise, a close burst does not affect its creator. However, an area burst can affect its creator.

Wall: A wall fills a specified number of contiguous squares within range, starting from an origin square. For example, a wall 8 fills 8 contiguous squares. The squares can be lined up horizontally or stacked vertically. A power specifies a wall's maximum height in its description. Each square of the wall must share a side—not just a corner—with at least one other square of the wall, but a square can share no more than two sides with other squares in the wall (this limitation does not apply when stacking squares on top of each other). A wall's creator can shape the wall within those limitations. A solid wall, such as a wall of ice or stone, cannot be created in occupied squares.

Attack Rolls

To determine whether an attack hits, the attacker's player makes an attack roll, rolling a d20 and adding the appropriate modifiers. If the result equals or exceeds the specified defense of the target (AC, Fortitude, Reflex, or Will), the attack hits. Otherwise, it misses.

Players use the information in player books such as *Heroes of the Fallen Lands* and *Heroes of the Forgotten Kingdoms* to determine the attack modifiers for their powers. As the Dungeon Master, you most often use the numbers for monsters from sources such as *Monster Vault*.

Automatic Hit: When an attacker makes an attack roll and rolls a 20 on the d20, the attack automatically hits, regardless of modifiers. The attacker also probably scored a critical hit (see below).

Automatic Miss: When an attacker makes an attack roll and rolls a 1 on the d20, the attack automatically misses, regardless of modifiers.

Critical Hits

Occasionally an attack is a bull's-eye: It hits so well that a target takes more damage than normal. Such a lucky result is called a critical hit (sometimes shortened to "crit").

Natural 20: When an attacker gets a natural 20 on an attack roll against a target, the power not only automatically hits the target, but also scores a critical hit if the attack roll result is high enough to hit the target's defense. If the result is too low to hit the defense, the power still hits the target automatically, but without scoring a critical hit.

Precision: Some powers and other abilities allow a creature to score a critical hit on a roll other than 20, but only a natural 20 is an automatic hit.

Maximum Damage: When an attack scores a critical hit against a target, the target takes the maximum damage possible from the attack power. Don't make a damage roll. Instead, the target takes damage as if the attacker had rolled the maximum result for damage. However, attacks that don't deal damage still don't deal damage on a critical hit.

Extra Damage: Magic weapons and implements can increase the damage dealt on a critical hit by contributing extra damage. If this extra damage is a die roll, it is not automatically maximum damage; you roll the specified dice and add the result to the critical hit's damage.

Defenses

A creature's ability to avoid injury and other ill effects is measured by four defenses: Armor Class, Fortitude, Reflex, and Will. Defense scores rate how hard it is for attacks to hit a creature—they serve as the target numbers for attack rolls. An adventurer's defenses are set at character creation and increase with level. A monster's defenses are specified in its statistics block.

BONUSES AND PENALTIES

Attack rolls, damage rolls, defenses, skill checks, and ability checks are often modified by bonuses and penalties.

Bonuses: There's one important rule for bonuses: Don't add together bonuses of the same type to the same roll or score. If a creature has two or more bonuses of the same type (such as "power bonus") that apply to the same roll or score, use the higher bonus.

Some bonuses are untyped ("a +2 bonus"). Most of these are situational and add together with other bonuses, including other untyped bonuses. However, untyped bonuses from the same named game element (a power, a feat, and the like) are not cumulative; only the highest of those bonuses applies, unless an effect states otherwise.

Penalties: Unlike bonuses, penalties don't have types. Penalties add together, unless they're from the same named game element. If two monsters attack an adventurer with the same power and each causes the adventurer to take a penalty to a particular roll or score, he or she doesn't add the penalties together but instead takes the worst penalty.

A penalty might be effectively canceled by a bonus and vice versa. If a creature gains a +2 bonus to attack rolls and takes a -2 penalty to attack rolls at the same time, it ends up with a +0 modifier.

Armor Class (AC) measures how hard it is to land a significant blow on a creature with an attack power using a weapon or a magical effect that works like a weapon. Some creatures have a high AC because they are extremely quick or intelligent and able to dodge well, while other creatures have a high AC because they wear heavy armor that is difficult to penetrate.

Fortitude measures the inherent toughness, mass, strength, and resilience of a creature. It is the key defense against attacks that include effects such as disease, poison, and forced movement.

Reflex measures a creature's ability to predict attacks or to deflect or dodge an attack. It's useful against areas of effect such as dragon breath or a *fireball* spell.

Will is a creature's defense against effects that disorient, confuse, or overpower the mind. It measures strength of will, self-discipline, and devotion.

ATTACK ROLL MODIFIERS

Temporary advantages and disadvantages in combat are reflected in a set of common attack roll modifiers. An attack roll modifier is a bonus or a penalty that applies to an attack roll in certain circumstances.

ATTACK ROLL MODIFIERS

Circumstance	Modifier
Combat advantage against target	+2
Attacker is prone	-2
Attacker is restrained	-2
Target has partial cover	-2
Target has superior cover	-5
Target has partial concealment (melee and ranged only)	-2
Target has total concealment (melee and ranged only)	-5
Long range (weapon attacks only)	-2

Combat Advantage

One of the most common attack roll modifiers is combat advantage, which represents a situation in which a target can't give full attention to defense. The target is pressed by multiple enemies at the same time, stunned, distracted, or otherwise caught off guard. Combat advantage has two rules.

- ◆ **+2 Bonus to Attack Rolls:** A creature gains a +2 bonus to attack rolls against a target granting combat advantage to it.
- ◆ **Able to See Target:** A creature must be able to see a target to gain combat advantage against it. This rule means a blinded creature cannot have combat advantage against anyone.

Once per encounter, a creature can try to gain combat advantage against a target by making a Bluff check (page 104).

Combat advantage is relative. In any given pair of combatants, either, both, or neither might have combat advantage against the other. It's possible for a single creature to be adjacent to one enemy that has combat advantage against it and a second enemy that does not.

Flanking One of the simplest ways to gain combat advantage is for two allied creatures to take up flanking positions adjacent to an enemy.

Combat Advantage: A creature has combat advantage against any enemy it flanks.

Opposite Sides: To flank an enemy, a creature and at least one of its allies must be adjacent to the enemy and on opposite sides or corners of the enemy's space.

When in doubt about whether two creatures flank an enemy, trace an imaginary line between the centers of the creatures' spaces. If the line passes through opposite sides or corners of the enemy's space, the enemy is flanked.

Large, Huge, and Gargantuan

Creatures: A Large or larger creature is flanking as long as at least one square of its space qualifies for flanking.

Restrictions:

A creature cannot flank an enemy that it can't see. A creature also cannot flank while it is subjected to any effect that prevents it from taking actions. If no line of effect exists between a creature and its enemy, the creature cannot flank the enemy.



Cover and Concealment

Many types of terrain offer places to hide or obstructions that combatants can duck behind to avoid attacks. Cover means solid obstructions that can physically deflect or stop objects. Concealment means objects or effects that don't physically impede an attack but instead hide a creature from view.

Cover Targets behind a low wall, around a corner, or behind a tree enjoy some amount of cover. They can't be hit as easily as normal—the attacker takes a penalty to attack rolls against them. There are two degrees of cover.

- ◆ **Partial Cover (-2 Penalty to Attack Rolls):** An attacker takes a -2 penalty to attack rolls against a target that has partial cover (sometimes simply called “cover”). The target is around a corner or protected by terrain. For example, the target might be in the same square as a small tree, obstructed by a small pillar or a large piece of furniture, or crouching behind a low wall.
- ◆ **Superior Cover (-5 Penalty to Attack Rolls):** An attacker takes a -5 penalty to attack rolls against a target that has superior cover. The target is protected by a significant terrain advantage, such as when fighting from behind a window, a portcullis, a grate, or an arrow slit.

The following rules govern both degrees of cover.

Determining Cover: To determine if a target has cover, choose a corner of a square the attacker occupies, or a corner of the attack's origin square, and trace imaginary lines from that corner to every corner of any one square that the target occupies. If one or two of those lines are blocked by an obstacle or an enemy, the target has partial cover. (A line isn't blocked if it runs along the edge of an obstacle's or an enemy's square.) If three or four of those lines are blocked yet line of effect remains—as when a target is behind an arrow slit—the target has superior cover.

Reach: If a creature that has reach (see “Creature Size and Space,” page 123) attacks through terrain that would grant cover if the target were in it, the target has cover. For example, even if a target isn't in the same square as a small pillar, it has cover against the *greatclub* attack of an ogre on the other side of the pillar.

Area Attacks and Close Attacks: Against an area attack power or a close attack power, a target has cover only if there is an obstruction between it and the power's origin square.

Creatures and Cover: When a creature makes a ranged attack against an enemy target and other enemies are in the way, the target has partial cover. A creature's allies never grant cover to the creature's enemies, and neither allies nor enemies give cover against melee, close, or area attacks.

Concealment

If an attacker can't get a good look at a target, the target has concealment: The attacker takes a penalty to melee and ranged attack rolls against that target. The battle might be in an area of dim light (see “Vision and Light,” page 95), in a chamber filled with smoke or mist, or among terrain features, such as foliage, that get in the way of vision.

Unless noted otherwise, area powers and close powers are not affected by concealment. Such powers often produce explosions or great weapon swings that don't depend on vision.

Obscured Squares The degree to which a square is obscured helps determine how much concealment a target has while in that square.

- ◆ **Lightly Obscured:** Squares of dim light, foliage, fog, smoke, heavy falling snow, or rain are lightly obscured.
- ◆ **Heavily Obscured:** Squares of heavy fog, thick smoke, or dense foliage are heavily obscured.
- ◆ **Totally Obscured:** Squares of darkness are totally obscured.

TARGETING WHAT YOU CAN'T SEE

Sometimes a creature attacks an enemy it can't see—the enemy is invisible, the attacking creature is blinded, or the fight is taking place in impenetrable darkness. In these situations, the attacker has to target a square rather than the enemy. It also has to figure out which square to attack. Here's how the rule works.

Invisible Creatures and Stealth: If an invisible creature is hidden from the attacker, the attacker can neither hear nor see it, and it has to guess the creature's position. If the invisible creature is not hidden from the attacker, the attacker can hear it or sense some other sign of its presence and therefore knows where it is, although it still can't see the creature.

Make a Perception Check: On its turn, the attacker can make a Perception check as a minor action to try to determine the location of an invisible creature that is hidden from it.

Pick a Square and Attack: The attacker chooses a square to attack, using whatever information it has gleaned about the enemy's location. It makes the attack roll normally (taking the -5 penalty for attacking a target that has total concealment). If the attacker picks the wrong square, that attack automatically misses, but only you know whether it guessed wrong or simply rolled too low to hit.

Close or Area Attacks: An attacker can make a close attack or an area attack that includes the square it thinks (or knows) the invisible creature is in. The attack roll doesn't take a penalty from the target's concealment.

Hidden: When a creature is hidden from an enemy, it is silent and invisible to that enemy. Creatures normally use the Stealth skill to become hidden.

Degrees of Concealment There are two degrees of concealment.

- ◆ **Partial Concealment (-2 Penalty to Attack Rolls):** An attacker takes a -2 penalty to melee and ranged attack rolls against a target that has partial concealment (sometimes simply called "concealment"). The target is in a lightly obscured square or in a heavily obscured square but adjacent to the attacker.
- ◆ **Total Concealment (-5 Penalty to Attack Rolls):** An attacker takes a -5 penalty to melee and ranged attack rolls against a target that has total concealment. The attacker can't see the target: It is invisible, in a totally obscured square, or in a heavily obscured square and not adjacent to the attacker.

Invisibility A variety of powers and other effects can turn a creature invisible, effectively giving it total concealment. An invisible creature can take advantage of several benefits.

- ◆ It can't be seen by normal forms of vision.
- ◆ It has total concealment against any enemy that can't see it.

- ◆ It has combat advantage against any enemy that can't see it (but it still has to be able to see the enemy).
- ◆ It doesn't provoke opportunity attacks from enemies that can't see it.

Attack Results

Powers specify what happens when their attacks hit or miss. The most common result of an attack that hits is damage. Attacks also subject targets to conditions (page 149), forced movement (page 130), and unusual effects described in certain powers.

Damage The damage dealt by an attack is specified in the attack's power. Damage often has a type, such as fire or lightning, and it is either instantaneous or ongoing (see "Ongoing Damage" below). Whatever its type or duration, damage against a target reduces that target's hit points (see "Hit Points and Healing" below).

Damage Rolls

When most attack powers deal damage, they do so through a damage roll: a roll of dice to determine damage. Whenever a power or other effect requires a damage roll, it specifies which dice to roll and how many of them.

Players use the information in player books such as *Heroes of the Fallen Lands* and *Heroes of the Forgotten Kingdoms* to determine the damage for their powers. As the Dungeon Master, you most often use the numbers for monsters from sources such as *Monster Vault*.

Damage Types: In addition to normal damage, such as the damage a weapon or a monster's claws deal, powers and other effects can deal specific types of damage. For example, a white dragon's breath deals cold damage, and a scorpion's sting deals poison damage. If a power doesn't specify a damage type, the damage has no type.

Extra Damage: Many powers and other effects grant the ability to deal extra damage. Extra damage is always in addition to other damage and is of the same type or types as that damage, unless otherwise noted. An effect that deals no damage cannot deal extra damage. However, a power doesn't necessarily have to hit a target to deal extra damage—it needs only to deal damage to the target.

Half Damage: Some powers deal half damage when they miss, and some effects, such as the weakened condition (page 151), cause damage to be halved. When a power or other effect deals half damage, first apply all modifiers to the damage, including resistances and vulnerabilities, and then divide the damage in half (round down).

Resistance: Resistance means a creature takes less damage from a specific damage type. Resistance appears in a statistics block or power as “resist X,” where X is the amount that the damage is reduced, followed by the type of damage that is being resisted. For example, a creature that has resist 5 fire takes 5 less fire damage whenever it takes that type of damage. Damage cannot be reduced below 0.

Some creatures are inherently resistant to certain damage types, as noted in their statistics blocks, and some powers and other effects grant temporary resistance.

A creature’s resistance is ineffective against combined damage types unless the creature has resistance to each of the damage types, and then only the weakest of the resistances applies. For example, a creature has resist 10 lightning and resist 5 thunder and an attack deals 15 lightning and thunder damage to it. The creature takes 10 lightning and thunder damage, because the resistance to the combined damage types is limited to the lesser of the two (in this case, 5 thunder). If the creature had only resist 10 lightning, it would take all 15 damage from the attack.

Resistances against the same damage type are not cumulative. Only the highest resistance applies. For example, if a creature has resist 5 cold and then gains resist 10 cold, it now has resist 10 cold, not resist 15 cold. Similarly, if a creature has resist 5 cold and then gains resist 2 to all damage, the creature still has resist 5 cold, not resist 7 cold.

Vulnerability: Being vulnerable to a damage type means a creature takes extra damage from that damage type. Vulnerability appears in a statistics block or power as “vulnerable X,” where X is the amount of the extra damage. For example, if a creature has vulnerable 5 fire, it takes 5 extra fire damage whenever it takes that type of damage.

Vulnerability to a specific damage type applies even when that damage type is combined with another. For example, if a creature has vulnerable 5 fire, the creature takes 5 extra fire damage when it takes ongoing fire and radiant damage.

Vulnerabilities to the same damage type are not cumulative. Only the highest vulnerability applies. For example, if a creature has vulnerable 5 psychic and then gains vulnerable 10 psychic, it has vulnerable 10 psychic, not vulnerable 15 psychic. Similarly, if a creature has vulnerable 5 psychic and then gains vulnerable 2 to all damage, the creature still has vulnerable 5 psychic, not vulnerable 7 psychic.

Immunity: Some creatures are immune to certain effects. If a creature is immune to a damage type (such as cold or fire), it doesn’t take that type of damage. If a creature is immune to charm, fear, illusion, or poison, it is unaffected by the nondamaging effects of a power that has that keyword. A creature that is immune to a condition or another effect (such as the dazed condition or forced movement) is unaffected by the stated effect.

Immunity to one part of a power does not make a creature immune to other parts of the power. For example, when hit by a power that both deals thunder damage and pushes the target, a creature that is immune to thunder takes no damage, but the power can still push it.

Insubstantial: Some creatures, such as wraiths, are naturally insubstantial, and some powers can make a creature insubstantial. While a creature is insubstantial, it takes half damage from any attack that deals damage to it. Ongoing damage is also halved.

Ongoing Damage Some powers deal damage on consecutive turns after the initial attack. Such damage is called ongoing damage. An efreet might hit a creature with a burst of fire that sets it alight, dealing ongoing fire damage. When a snake's venom courses through a creature's blood, it deals ongoing poison damage. A royal mummy's *plague chant* deals ongoing necrotic damage.

Start of a Creature's Turn: When a creature is subjected to ongoing damage, it does not take the damage right away. Instead, the creature takes the specified damage at the start of each of its turns, until the ongoing damage ends. For example, a creature that is subjected to ongoing 5 fire damage takes 5 fire damage at the start of each of its turns.

Save Ends: Unless noted otherwise, an instance of ongoing damage lasts on a creature until the creature makes a successful saving throw against it. See "Saving Throws," page 148.

Different Types of Ongoing Damage: If a creature is subjected to ongoing damage of different types (including no type) at the same time, it takes damage of each of those types every round, and it must make a separate saving throw against each damage type. For example, if a creature is taking ongoing 5 damage (which has no type) when a power causes it to take ongoing 5 lightning damage, it is now taking ongoing 5 damage and ongoing 5 lightning damage, and it must make saving throws against each effect.

Same Type of Ongoing Damage: If a creature is subjected to multiple instances of ongoing damage of the same type at the same time (including no type), only the highest number applies. For example, if a creature is taking ongoing 5 damage (which has no type) when a power causes it to take ongoing 10 damage, the creature is now taking ongoing 10 damage, not 15.

Durations

Many effects in the game are instantaneous, as brief as a sword swing or a fiery explosion. Some effects last for a round or more, however. Such an effect has a duration, a specific amount of time that the effect lasts. There are two types of durations: conditional and sustained.

Conditional Durations An effect that has a conditional duration lasts until a specific event occurs. Three conditional durations appear more than any other in the game.

- ◆ **Until the Start/End of Someone's Next Turn:** The effect ends when a specific creature's next turn starts or ends. The creature is usually the one who produced the effect or the target of it.
- ◆ **Until the End of the Encounter:** The effect ends at the end of the current encounter or after 5 minutes, whichever comes first.
- ◆ **Save Ends:** The effect ends when the target makes a successful saving throw against it. See "Saving Throws," below.

Sustained Durations Some effects can be sustained for multiple rounds. Such an effect is labeled with the word "sustain." That word is followed by the name of an action type: "sustain standard," "sustain move," "sustain minor," and the like.

How to Sustain: On the turn that a creature creates a sustainable effect, the creature can do nothing to sustain it; the effect automatically lasts until the end of the creature's next turn, unless noted otherwise. Starting on that next turn, the creature can begin sustaining the effect.

To sustain the effect, the creature must take the type of action indicated in the effect's label. For example, if the effect is labeled "sustain minor," the creature must take a minor action to sustain it.

Consequences of Sustaining: When the creature sustains the effect, the effect lasts until the end of the creature's next turn, unless noted otherwise. Sustaining an effect often has consequences beyond extending the duration. An effect might let the creature attack each time it is sustained, for instance. The description of a sustainable effect notes any such consequences.

Limitations: The creature can sustain a particular effect only once per round and for no more than 5 minutes. During that time, the creature cannot take a short or an extended rest.

Overlapping Durations When a creature is subjected to identical effects that end at different times, it ignores all but the effect with the most time remaining.

Effects that a save can end (labeled "save ends") work differently, since you don't know when they're going to end. Therefore, effects that a save can end are tracked separately from those that end at specific times.

Saving Throws

Some persistent effects last until a creature makes a successful saving throw against them, and some instantaneous effects, such as falling down a pit, can be avoided by making a successful saving throw. A successful saving throw is called a *save*.

A persistent effect that a save can end includes one of the following notations in parentheses: “save ends,” “save ends both,” or “save ends all.” For example, a power might say, “The target is dazed (save ends),” which means the target is dazed until it saves against that condition.

The rules tell you when an instantaneous effect can be avoided with a save. For examples, see “Forced Movement,” page 130.

How to Make a Saving Throw: To make a saving throw for a creature you’re playing, you roll a d20 without adding any modifiers, unless the creature has bonuses or penalties that specifically apply to saving throws. If you roll lower than 10, the creature fails the saving throw, and the effect continues. If you roll 10 or higher, the creature saves, and the effect ends.

When two effects are followed by the notation “save ends both,” those effects are treated as a single effect when saving throws are made against them. For example, if a creature is “weakened and slowed (save ends both),” it makes a single saving throw against those two conditions whenever the time comes for it to make saving throws. Similarly, effects that are followed by the notation “save ends all” are treated as a single effect when saving throws are made against them.

When to Make Saving Throws: At the end of each of a creature’s turns, the creature makes saving throws against each effect on it that a save can end. Whenever you make saving throws against multiple effects that a save can end on a creature you’re playing, you choose the order of the saving throws.

Sometimes a power or other game feature allows a creature to make a saving throw at a time other than the end of its turn. If the creature is allowed to make a single saving throw when its suffering from multiple effects that a save can end, its player chooses which of those effects to make the saving throw against.

Identical Effects That a Save Can End: If a creature is subjected to identical effects that a save can end, ignore all but one of those effects. For example, if a creature is dazed (save ends) and then is attacked and again dazed (save ends), ignore the second effect, since it is identical to the effect the creature is already suffering.

You never make multiple saving throws against identical effects. You do, however, make separate saving throws against effects that aren’t identical, even if they contain the same condition. For example, dazed (save ends) and dazed and immobilized (save ends both) are not identical effects, so separate saving throws are made against them.

Aftereffect: An aftereffect automatically occurs after another effect ends.

An “Aftereffect” entry follows the effect it applies to, which is typically in a “Hit” or an “Effect” entry. For example, a power’s “Hit” entry might state that the target is stunned (save ends), and then the power’s “Aftereffect” entry might state that the target is dazed instead of stunned (save ends). Together those entries mean that the target is dazed as soon as it saves against the stunned condition.

If a target is subjected to an aftereffect after a save and that save occurs when the target is making multiple saving throws, the aftereffect takes effect after the target has finished making all its saving throws.

Conditions

Conditions are states imposed on creatures by various effects, including powers, traps, and the environment. A condition is usually temporary, imposing a penalty, a vulnerability, a hindrance, or a combination of effects.

The effect that imposes a condition on a creature specifies how long the condition lasts. However, some conditions have built-in rules for when they end. For example, the prone condition ends on a character who stands up, and the dying condition ends on a character who regains hit points.

Conditions don’t have degrees of effect; either a creature has a condition or it doesn’t. Putting the same condition on a creature more than once doesn’t change the condition’s effect on that creature. For example, if a weakened creature is subjected to the weakened condition again, the creature still deals half damage, not one-quarter.

The following definitions specify the effects of each condition while a creature is subjected to it. Some conditions include other conditions within their effects. For example, an unconscious is also helpless and prone.

Blinded: While a creature is blinded, it can’t see, which means its targets have total concealment against it, and it takes a -10 penalty to Perception checks. It also grants combat advantage and can’t flank.

Dazed: While a creature is dazed, it can take either a standard, a move, or a minor action on its turn. It can still take free actions, but it can’t take immediate or opportunity actions. It also grants combat advantage and can’t flank.

Deafened: While a creature is deafened, it can’t hear, and it takes a -10 penalty to Perception checks.

Dominated: While a creature is dominated, it can’t take actions. Instead, the dominator chooses a single action for the creature to take on its turn: a standard, a move, or a minor action. The only powers the dominator can make the creature use are at-will powers. The creature also grants combat advantage and can’t flank.

Dying: Dropping to 0 hit points or fewer causes an adventurer to suffer this condition, which ends if the character regains hit points. While a character is dying, he or she is unconscious and must make death saving throws (see “Dying and Death,” page 165).

Grabbed: While a creature is grabbed, it is immobilized. Maintaining this condition on the creature occupies whatever appendage, object, or effect the grabber used to initiate the grab. This condition ends immediately on the creature if the grabber is subjected to an effect that prevents it from taking actions, or if the creature ends up outside the range of the grabbing power or effect.

Helpless: While a creature is helpless, it grants combat advantage and can be the target of a coup de grace (see page 156).

Immobilized: When a creature is immobilized, it can't move, unless it teleports or is pulled, pushed, or slid.

Marked: When a creature is marked, it takes a -2 penalty to attack rolls for any attack that doesn't include the marking creature as a target. A creature can be subjected to only one mark at a time, and a new mark supersedes an old one. A mark ends immediately when its creator dies or falls unconscious.

Petrified: A petrified creature is unconscious, has resist 20 to all damage, and doesn't age. A creature usually suffers this condition when it has been turned to stone.

Prone: When a creature is prone, it is lying down. If the creature is climbing or flying when it is knocked prone, it falls. It takes a -2 penalty to attack rolls, and the only way it can move is by crawling, teleporting, or being pulled, pushed, or slid. In addition, it grants combat advantage to enemies making melee attacks against it, but it gains a +2 bonus to all defenses against ranged attacks from enemies that aren't adjacent to it. A creature can drop prone as a minor action, and can end this condition on itself by standing up.

Removed From Play: A creature normally suffers this condition because of being transported to another plane of existence or being engulfed or swallowed. A creature that has been removed from play can't take actions. It has neither line of sight nor line of effect to anything, and nothing has line of sight or line of effect to it.

Restrained: While a creature is restrained, it can't move unless it teleports, and it can't be pulled, pushed, or slid. It also takes a -2 penalty to attack rolls and grants combat advantage.

Slowed: The creature's speed becomes 2 if it was higher than that. This speed applies to all of the creature's movement modes (walking, flying, swimming, and so on), but it does not apply to forced movement against it, teleportation, or any other movement that doesn't use the creature's speed. If a creature is subjected to this condition while the creature is moving using any of its speeds, it must stop if it has already moved at least 2 squares. The creature cannot benefit from bonuses to speed, although it can use powers and take actions, such as the run action, that allow it to move farther than its speed.

Stunned: While a creature is stunned, it can't take actions. It also grants combat advantage and can't flank. The creature falls if it is flying, unless it can hover.

Surprised: While a creature is surprised, it can't take actions. It also grants combat advantage and can't flank.

Unconscious: While a creature is unconscious, it is helpless, it can't take actions, and it takes a -5 penalty to all defenses. The creature is unaware of its surroundings and can't flank. When a creature is subjected to this condition, it falls prone, if possible.

Weakened: While a creature is weakened, its attacks deal half damage. However, two kinds of damage that it deals are not affected: ongoing damage and damage that isn't generated by an attack roll.

ACTIONS IN COMBAT

During a character's turn, you can choose from a wide variety of actions. Usually, the most important decision you make in combat is what to do with a character's standard action each turn. Does he or she use a power? If so, which one? Or does the situation demand a different approach, such as using that standard action to charge, try to talk to foes, or instead get a second move action this turn? This section describes how to perform typical actions in combat.

The list isn't exhaustive; a character can try to do anything you can imagine in the game world. The rules in this section cover the most common actions, and they can serve as a guide for figuring out what happens when you try something not in the rules.

STANDARD ACTIONS

Action	Description
Administer a potion	Help an unconscious creature consume a potion
Aid another	Improve an ally's skill check or ability check
Aid attack	Improve an ally's attack roll
Aid defense	Improve an ally's defenses
Basic attack	Make a basic attack
Bull rush	Push a target 1 square and shift into the vacated space
Charge	Move and then make a melee basic attack or a bull rush
Coup de grace	Make a critical hit against a helpless enemy
Equip or stow a shield	Use a shield or put it away
Grab	Seize and hold an enemy
Ready an action	Ready an action to perform when a specified trigger occurs
Second wind	Spend a healing surge and gain a bonus to defenses (once per encounter)
Total defense	Gain a +2 bonus to all defenses until next turn

MOVE ACTIONS

Action	Description
Crawl	While prone, move up to half speed
Escape	Escape a grab and shift 1 square
Run	Move up to speed + 2; grant combat advantage until next turn and take a -5 penalty to attack rolls
Stand up	Stand up from prone
Shift	Move 1 square without provoking opportunity attacks
Squeeze	Reduce size by one category, move up to half speed, and grant combat advantage
Walk	Move up to walking speed

MINOR ACTIONS

Action	Description
Draw or sheathe a weapon	Use or put away a weapon
Drink a potion	Consume a potion
Drop prone	Drop down to lie on the ground
Load a crossbow	Load a bolt into a crossbow to fire it
Open or close	Open or close a door or container that isn't locked or stuck
Pick up an item	Pick up an object in one's space or in an unoccupied square within reach
Retrieve or stow an item	Retrieve or stow an item on self

IMMEDIATE ACTION

Action	Description
Readied action	Take readied action when its trigger occurs

OPPORTUNITY ACTION

Action	Description
Opportunity attack	Make a melee basic attack against an enemy that provokes an opportunity attack

FREE ACTIONS

Action	Description
Delay	Put off a turn until later in the initiative order
Drop held items	Drop any items currently held in one's space or in an unoccupied square within reach
End a grab	Let go of an enemy
Spend an action point	Spend an action point to take an extra action (once per encounter, not in a surprise round)
Talk	Speak a few sentences

Action Points

Action points allow creatures to take more actions than normal. Adventurers each start with 1 action point, and some monsters have action points, as noted in their statistics blocks. Typically an adventurer spends an action point to pull off an extra attack, to move farther than normal, to take the second wind action (see below) in the same turn that he or she attacks, and so on.

Spend an Action Point

- ◆ **Action:** Free action. A creature must have an action point to take this action. Also, the creature can take this action only during its turn, and never during a surprise round.
- ◆ **Gain an Extra Action:** The creature gains an extra action to use during its current turn. The action can be a standard, a move, or a minor action. Some creatures have special abilities that trigger when they spend action points, and some have the option of gaining a benefit other than an extra action when they spend their points.
- ◆ **Once per Encounter or Round:** An adventurer can spend an action point only once per encounter. In contrast, a monster that has action points can spend more than 1 action point during an encounter, but only 1 per round.
- ◆ **Gone When Spent:** An action point is gone when spent, regardless of the success of the action taken.

Earning Action Points Adventurers earn action points as they complete more and more encounters. Each adventurer gains 1 action point whenever he or she reaches a milestone (page 242): completing two encounters without taking an extended rest. You might award an action point to each adventurer who completes an unusually difficult encounter.

Regardless of milestones, a creature's action point total reverts to its starting value whenever the creature completes an extended rest, so an adventurer has 1, and only 1, action point at the end of an extended rest. Because of this rule, a creature benefits most from spending its action points as often as possible.

Aid Another

A creature can use a standard action to try to aid an adjacent creature's skill check or ability check. See "Aid Another," page 105.

Aid Attack

A creature can aid an ally's attack against an enemy. This action represents a feint, a distraction, or some other action that makes it easier for the ally to hit the enemy.

Aid an Ally's Attack

- ◆ **Action:** Standard action. When a creature takes this action, it chooses an enemy adjacent to it.
- ◆ **Grant Bonus to Attack Roll:** The creature chooses an ally. That ally gains a +2 bonus to its next attack roll against the chosen enemy. This bonus ends if not used by the end of the aiding creature's next turn. A creature can take the aid attack action only once to affect a particular attack roll. However, up to four creatures can take the action to affect that attack roll.

Aid Defense

A creature can try to protect an ally against an enemy. This action represents a parry, a shield block, or some other action that makes it harder for the enemy to hit the ally.

Aid an Ally's Defenses

- ◆ **Action:** Standard action. When a creature takes this action, it chooses an enemy adjacent to it.
- ◆ **Grant Bonus to Defenses:** The creature chooses an ally. That ally gains a +2 bonus to all defenses against the chosen enemy's next attack against it. This bonus ends if not used by the end of the aiding creature's next turn. A creature can take the aid attack action only once to affect a particular ally's defenses. However, up to four creatures can take the action to affect that ally's defenses.

Basic Attack

Sometimes a creature just wants to hit something. The following two *basic attack* powers—one melee and one ranged—are powers that everyone can use, regardless of class (see page 89 for how to read a power). Using either of these powers is usually referred to as making a basic attack. Some classes provide alternatives to these default powers, and each monster has its own *basic attack* power, which is noted in its statistics block with a circle around the attack icon.

Melee Basic Attack

Basic Attack

You resort to the simple attack you learned when you first picked up a melee weapon.

At-Will ♦ **Weapon**

Standard Action **Melee weapon**

Target: One creature

Attack: Strength vs. AC

Hit: 1[W] + Strength modifier damage.

Level 21: 2[W] + Strength modifier damage.

A creature uses a melee basic attack to make an opportunity attack and to make a charge attack. Even if it has no weapon equipped, it can make a melee basic attack using an unarmed strike (such as a kick or punch) or another improvised weapon.

Ranged Basic Attack

Basic Attack

You resort to the simple attack you learned when you first picked up a ranged weapon.

At-Will ♦ **Weapon**

Standard Action **Ranged weapon**

Target: One creature

Attack: Dexterity vs. AC

Hit: 1[W] + Dexterity modifier damage.

Level 21: 2[W] + Dexterity modifier damage.

A creature can make a ranged basic attack as long as it has something to throw or shoot.

Bull Rush

When a creature wants to push another creature away, the *bull rush* power is a good option. Although many classes and monsters have powers that can push a target farther, the advantage of *bull rush* is that anyone can use it, regardless of class.

You hurl yourself at your foe and push it back.

At-Will

Standard Action **Melee 1**

Target: One creature

Attack: Strength vs. Fortitude

Hit: You push the target 1 square and then shift 1 square into the space it left.

Charge

A creature uses the charge action when it wants to dash forward and launch an attack with a single action. Such an attack is sometimes referred to as a charge attack.

Charge a Target

- ◆ **Action:** Standard action. When a creature takes this action, it chooses a target. Determine the distance between the creature and the target (page 125), even counting through squares of blocking terrain, and then follow these steps.
 1. **Move:** The creature moves up to its speed toward the target. Each square of movement must bring the creature closer to the target, and the creature must end the move at least 2 squares away from its starting position.
 2. **Attack:** The creature either makes a melee basic attack against the target or uses *bull rush* (see above) against it. The creature gains a +1 bonus to the attack roll.
 3. **No Further Actions:** The creature can't take any further actions during this turn, except free actions.

Coup de Grace

Sometimes a creature has the chance to attack a foe that is completely defenseless. As a standard action, the creature uses one of its attack powers against an adjacent target that is helpless (see “Conditions,” page 149). If the attack hits, it automatically scores a critical hit against the target. If the critical hit deals damage greater than or equal to the target's bloodied value, the target dies.

Crawl

When a creature is prone, crawling is one of the only ways it can move. As a move action, the creature moves up to half its speed.

Delay

A creature can choose to wait to take its turn until later in a round. It might want to see what actions its allies take so that it can plan tactics, or be waiting for enemies to move into range.

Delay Turn

- ◆ **Action:** Free action. A creature can take this action only when its turn is about to start.
- ◆ **Delay until Later Initiative:** The creature delays its turn until it decides to act later in the initiative order. However, parts of the creature's turn occur the moment the creature delays, as detailed below.
- ◆ **Returning to the Initiative Order:** After any turn has been completed, the creature can step back into the initiative order and take its turn. The creature's initiative changes to this new position in the initiative order.
- ◆ **Start of Turn:** The start of the creature's turn occurs when the creature delays, not when it later takes its turn. Thus, effects that are triggered by the start of the turn still take place—they can't be avoided by delaying.
- ◆ **End of Turn:** The end of the creature's turn gets split in two: when the creature delays and when it later takes its delayed turn. Different things occur at each of those times.

End of Turn When the Creature Delays: At the moment the creature delays, any effect ends that it has been sustaining. In addition, effects that last until the end of the creature's turn now end if they are beneficial to it and its allies—they cannot be prolonged by delaying. For example, if the creature stunned an enemy until the end of its next turn, the stunned condition ends as soon as the creature delays.

End of Turn after the Creature Acts: After the creature returns to the initiative order and takes its delayed turn, it makes the saving throws it normally makes at the end of its turn. In addition, harmful effects that last until the end of the creature's turn now end—they cannot be avoided by delaying. For example, if the creature is weakened until the end of its next turn, the weakened condition ends only after it acts.

- ◆ **Losing a Delayed Turn:** If the creature doesn't take its delayed turn before its initiative comes back up in the order, it loses the delayed turn and its initiative remains where it was.

Escape

A creature can attempt to escape when it is grabbed. Other immobilizing effects might also let a creature try to escape.

Escape a Grab or Immobilizing Effect

- ◆ **Action:** Move action.
- ◆ **Acrobatics or Athletics Check:** The creature chooses to make either an Acrobatics or an Athletics check. Normally, the immobilizing effect specifies the DC for the check. If no DC is specified, an Acrobatics check is opposed by the Reflex of the immobilizing creature or effect, and an Athletics check is opposed by the Fortitude.
- ◆ **Against Multiple Grabbers:** If the creature is trying to escape and is grabbed by more than one source at once, the creature makes a single check against the highest of the grab DCs. The DC increases by 2 for each grabber beyond the first, to a maximum increase of 8.
- ◆ **Success:** If the check succeeds, the immobilizing effect ends on the creature, which can then shift 1 square.

Grab

By using the *grab* power, any creature can try to seize a target bodily and keep it from moving. Although class powers and monster powers are usually more effective than *grab* at locking a target down, the advantage of *grab* is that anyone can use it, regardless of class.

Grab

Attack

You reach out and grasp your foe, preventing it from moving.

At-Will

Standard Action **Melee touch**

Requirement: You must have a hand free.

Target: One creature that is no more than one size category larger than you

Attack: Strength vs. Reflex

Hit: You grab the target until the end of your next turn. You can end the grab as a free action.

Sustain Minor: The grab persists until the end of your next turn.

Moving a Grabbed Target

A creature can try to move a target it is grabbing, whether or not it used the *grab* power to grab the target.

Move a Grabbed Target

- ◆ **Action:** Standard action.
- ◆ **Strength Check:** The creature makes a Strength check opposed by the Fortitude of a target it is grabbing. The check automatically succeeds if the target is a helpless ally of the creature.

- ◆ **Success:** The creature can move up to half its speed and pull the target with it. The creature's movement doesn't provoke an opportunity attack from the grabbed target, but the movement otherwise provokes opportunity attacks as normal.

Opportunity Attack

In a fight, everyone is constantly watching for enemies to drop their guard. A creature can rarely move heedlessly past its foes or use a ranged power or an area power without putting itself in danger: Such actions trigger the *opportunity attack* power. Anyone can use *opportunity attack*, regardless of class.

Triggering this power is usually referred to as provoking an opportunity attack, and using it is usually referred to as making an opportunity attack.

Opportunity Attack

Attack

Your foe drops its guard for a moment, and you exploit the opportunity.

At-Will

Opportunity Action **Melee 1**

Trigger: An enemy that you can see either leaves a square adjacent to you or uses a ranged or an area power while adjacent to you.

Target: The triggering enemy

Effect: You make a melee basic attack against the target.

Certain types of movement don't provoke opportunity actions, unless an effect specifies otherwise: forced movement (page 130), shifting (page 161), and teleportation (page 131).

Some powers and other effects allow a creature to enter an enemy's space. If that enemy is not helpless, entering its space still provokes an opportunity attack from that enemy, because the creature left a square adjacent to the enemy. (Forced movement, shifting, and teleportation ignore this fact, as normal.)

Threatening Reach Some creatures have a trait called threatening reach, which lets a creature make opportunity attacks against enemies that aren't adjacent to it. If an enemy provokes an opportunity attack within the creature's reach (see "Creature Size and Space," page 123), the creature can make an opportunity attack against it.

Ready an Action

When a creature readies an action, it prepares to react to an event or to someone else's action. Readying an action is a way of saying, "As soon as *x* happens, my character will do *y*." For instance, a player could say, "As soon as the troll walks out from behind the corner, I shoot an arrow at it," or "If the goblin ends its movement adjacent to me, I'll shift away."

Ready an Action

◆ **Action:** Standard action. To ready an action, a creature follows these steps.

1. **Choose Action to Ready:** Choose the specific action the creature is readying (the attack it plans to use, for example), as well as the intended target, if applicable. The creature can ready a standard action, a move action, or a minor action. Whichever action the player chooses, the act of readying it is a standard action.
2. **Choose Trigger:** Choose the circumstance that will trigger the readied action. When that trigger occurs, the creature can use the readied action. If the trigger doesn't occur or the creature chooses to ignore it, the creature can't use the readied action and instead takes its next turn as normal.
3. **Immediate Reaction:** Using a readied action is an immediate reaction, so it takes place right after the trigger is finished.
4. **Reset Initiative:** When the creature finishes the readied action, its place in the initiative order moves to directly before the creature or the event that triggered the readied action.

Run

By taking the run action, a creature can use an all-out sprint when it really needs to cover ground fast. However, this is a dangerous tactic; the creature has to lower its guard to make best speed, and it can't attack very well.



Run

- ◆ **Action:** Move action.
- ◆ **Speed + 2:** The creature moves up to its speed plus up to 2 additional squares. For example, if its speed is 6, the creature can move up to 8 squares when it runs.
- ◆ **-5 Penalty to Attack Rolls:** The creature takes a -5 penalty to attack rolls until the start of its next turn.
- ◆ **Grant Combat Advantage:** As soon as the creature begins running, it grants combat advantage until the start of its next turn.

Second Wind

Adventurers can dig into their resolve and endurance to find an extra burst of vitality. In game terms, an adventurer focuses momentarily on self-defense and spends a healing surge to regain some of his or her lost hit points. Using one's second wind is the one way that all adventurers have of healing themselves. They must otherwise rely on other sources of healing.

Unless otherwise noted in the statistics block of a monster, this action is available only to adventurers.

Use Second Wind

- ◆ **Action:** Standard action. A character can take this action only once per encounter, so he or she can take it again after a short or an extended rest.
A character can use his or her second wind without taking a standard action if another character administers first aid to him or her using the Heal skill (page 104).
- ◆ **Spend a Healing Surge:** The character spends a healing surge to regain hit points (see "Healing," later in this chapter).
- ◆ **+2 Bonus to All Defenses:** The character gains a +2 bonus to all defenses until the start of his or her next turn. However, the character does not gain this bonus if he or she uses second wind as a result of someone administering first aid.

Shift

Moving through a fierce battle is dangerous; a creature must be careful to avoid a misstep that gives a foe a chance to strike a telling blow. The way to move safely when enemies are nearby is to shift. When a creature wants to flee, the safest way to do that is often to first shift away from an adjacent enemy, then walk or run.

Shift

- ◆ **Action:** Move action.
- ◆ **Movement:** The creature moves 1 square. (Some powers and effects allow creatures to move farther than 1 square with a shift.)
- ◆ **No Opportunity Actions Triggered:** Unless an effect specifies otherwise, shifting doesn't trigger opportunity actions such as opportunity attacks.
- ◆ **Special Movement Modes:** A creature can't shift when using a movement mode that requires it to make a skill check. For example, if it is climbing, it can't shift if it has to make an Athletics check to climb. (A creature that has a climb speed can shift while climbing.)

Because a square of difficult terrain costs 1 extra square of movement to enter, a creature can't normally shift into such a square, unless it is able to shift multiple squares or ignores the effects of difficult terrain.

Squeeze

A creature can use the squeeze action to fit through an area that isn't as wide as it is. Big creatures usually use this action to move through tight corridors or to stand on narrow ledges, whereas a Medium or a Small creature can squeeze to fit into a constrained space, such as a burrow. While squeezing, a creature moves much more slowly and can't react as effectively in combat.

Squeeze

- ◆ **Action:** Move action. A creature follows these steps when it takes this action.
 1. **Reduce Size:** When a Large, a Huge, or a Gargantuan creature squeezes, its size category effectively decreases by one until the squeeze ends. For example, a Large creature that squeezes is effectively Medium during the squeeze. As its size decreases, such a creature is leaving squares, so it might trigger opportunity actions such as opportunity attacks. It cannot reduce its size if it is unable to move. When a Medium or smaller creature squeezes, you decide how narrow a space it can occupy.
 2. **Half Speed:** The creature moves up to half its speed.
- ◆ **Grant Combat Advantage:** The creature grants combat advantage until the squeeze ends.
- ◆ **-5 Penalty to Attack Rolls:** The creature takes a -5 penalty to attack rolls until the squeeze ends.

A creature takes a separate action to stop squeezing.

End a Squeeze

- ◆ **Action:** Free action.
- ◆ **Return to Normal Size:** The creature expands to its original size. When it does so, its new space must contain the smaller space that it just occupied.

Stand Up

As a move action, a creature can end the prone condition on itself by standing up. If the creature's space is not occupied by another creature, the creature stands up where it is. If the creature's space is occupied by another creature, the creature can stand up and shift 1 square to an unoccupied space. It can't stand up if no unoccupied space is adjacent to it.

Total Defense

Sometimes it's more important to guard against further injury than to attack. In such circumstances, a creature focuses its attention on defense. As a standard action, the creature gains a +2 bonus to all defenses until the start of its next turn.

Walk

The most common way that creatures change their positions in battle is by taking the walk action. As a move action, the creature moves up to its speed. Despite the action's name, a creature isn't always literally walking when it takes this action. The walk action can use special movement modes such as climbing, flying, and swimming.

HIT POINTS AND HEALING

Over the course of a battle, creatures take damage from attacks. Hit points (hp) measure creatures' ability to stand up to punishment, turn deadly strikes into glancing blows, and stay on their feet throughout a battle. Hit points represent physical endurance, skill, luck, and resolve.

When a creature takes damage, subtract that number from its current hit points. As long as its current hit point total is higher than 0, it can keep fighting. When a monster drops to 0 hit points, it dies. When an adventurer drops to 0 hit points or fewer, he or she is dying or might be dead (see "Dying and Death" below).

Powers, abilities, and actions that restore hit points are known as healing. When a creature regains hit points, add them to its current hit points. It can heal up to its maximum hit point total, not beyond.

Hit Points: Damage reduces hit points. An adventurer's class, level, and Constitution score determine his or her maximum hit points. A monster's maximum hit points are noted in its statistics block. A creature's current hit points can't exceed this number.

Bloodied Value: The bloodied value of a typical creature equals half of its maximum hit points. A creature is bloodied when its current hit points drop to its bloodied value or lower. Certain powers and effects work only against a bloodied target or work better against such a target.

An object is never considered to be bloodied. Also, when an unbloodied creature is killed outright, the creature is not bloodied in the process. The creature is just dead. This rule means a minion is bloodied only if an attacker reduces the minion to 0 hit points but knocks it unconscious instead of killing it.

Dying: When a character's current hit points drop to 0 or lower, the character is dying.

Healing Surges: Most healing requires a creature to spend a healing surge.

When a creature does so, it regains a number of hit points equal to its healing surge value (one-quarter of its maximum hit points). Once per encounter, an adventurer can use his or her second wind (see "Actions in Combat") to spend a healing surge. After a short rest, a character can spend as many healing surges as he or she likes outside combat.

Player characters have a number of healing surges determined by their class and Constitution. As a general rule, monsters and DM-controlled characters have a number of healing surges based on their tier: one healing surge at the heroic tier (1st–10th levels), two at the paragon tier (11th–20th levels), and three at the epic tier (21st–30th levels). However, they rarely have powers that allow them to use these healing surges.

Healing in Combat: Even in a heated battle, creatures can heal. Monsters heal only if they have healing powers, whereas adventurers heal themselves in a variety of ways. They can heal themselves by using second wind, one character can use the Heal skill to let another one use his or her second wind, and characters frequently use healing powers on one another. Some powers allow characters to heal as if they had spent a healing surge. When a character receives such healing, he or she doesn't actually spend the healing surge, but regains hit points as if he or she had.

Temporary Hit Points: A variety of sources grant temporary hit points, which aren't real hit points. They are a layer of insulation that attacks must get through before they start doing damage to a creature. Don't add temporary hit points to a creature's current hit points (if a character's current hit points are 0, he or she still has 0 when after receiving temporary hit points). Keep track of temporary hit points as a pool separate from hit points. Temporary hit points don't count when you compare a creature's current hit points to its maximum hit points, when you determine whether a creature is bloodied, or for other effects that depend on current hit points.

When a creature takes damage, first subtract the damage from its temporary hit points. If the damage eliminates all of the temporary hit points, subtract any remaining damage from the creature's current hit points.

Temporary hit points are not cumulative. If a creature gains temporary

hit points when it already has some, use the higher value as its temporary hit point total, instead of adding the values together. For example, if a creature has 4 temporary hit points and then gains 6 temporary hit points, it has 6 temporary hit points, not 10.

A creature's temporary hit points last until they are reduced to 0 or until the end of the encounter.

Regeneration: Regeneration is a special form of healing that restores a fixed number of hit points every round. Regeneration doesn't rely on healing surges. If a creature has regeneration and at least 1 hit point, it regains a specified number of hit points at the start of your turn. However, if the creature's current hit point total is 0 or lower, it does not regain hit points through regeneration.

Like most forms of healing, regeneration can't cause current hit points to exceed a creature's maximum hit points. If a creature gain regeneration from more than one source, only the largest amount of regeneration applies.

Dying and Death

When an attacker reduces a creature to 0 hit points or fewer, the attacker can decide to knock that creature unconscious (page 151). Otherwise, a monster that drops to 0 hit points immediately dies, and a player character who drops to 0 hit points or fewer is dying.

Dying: Adventurers who are dying can continue taking damage until they drop to their bloodied value expressed as a negative number, at which point they die. For example, a character whose bloodied value is 25 dies when he or she drops to -25 hit points.

While dying, a character must make a special saving throw—called a death saving throw—at the end of each of his or her turns. The result of the saving throw determines how close the character is to death. On a roll of 9 or lower, the character slips one step closer to death. If the character gets that result three times before taking a rest, he or she dies. On a roll of 10 or higher, there's no change in the character's condition. However, if the character gets a result of 20 or better, he or she can spend a healing surge. If the character does so, he or she is no longer dying and is conscious, but still prone. If a character gets a 20 or better but has no healing surges left, the character's condition doesn't change.

Healing the Dying: When a character is dying and receives healing, he or she is considered to have 0 hit points, and then regains hit points from the healing effect. If the healing effect requires the character to spend a healing surge but he or she has none left, the character is restored to 1 hit point. As soon as a character has a current hit point total that's higher than 0, the character becomes conscious and is no longer dying. The character remains prone until he or she uses a move action to stand up.

AFTER AN ENCOUNTER

When an encounter is over, you need to address lasting consequences, scouring the room, rest, and encounter rewards.

Encounter Consequences: Encounters don't occur in a vacuum. What happens in one encounter impacts future encounters—and the adventure.

Did any of the adventurers' opponents escape? If so, you need to determine what the fleeing foes do. Most intelligent creatures look for safe refuge or reinforcements. The same monsters, healed and ready for more action, might be waiting in another room, along with more powerful allies.

Did the adventurers kill a villain that's important to the adventure's plot? Make note of how that character's death affects the ongoing plot.

Searching the Room: Adventurers use Perception checks to find anything of interest in the room, such as treasure chests, secret doors, or a holy symbol of Zehir hidden on the body of the supposedly good priest of Pelor they just captured. The adventurers scour the room, rolling a lot of Perception checks. Unless the characters are under a time constraint, assume that they're going to roll a 20 eventually, and use the best possible Perception check result for the party. (Effectively, this result equals the best passive Perception check +10.) Assume the characters spend a minute or two searching, and move on to tell them what they find.

A published adventure tells you what there is to be found in a room and how hard it is to find. For your own adventures, use the Difficulty Class by Level table, page 107, with these guidelines:

SEARCH THE ROOM DCS

Perception DC	What the Adventurers Might Find
Easy	Anything valuable in a chest full of junk
Moderate	A valuable item tucked away in an unlikely place
Moderate	A secret latch or compartment
Hard	An average secret door

Resting Up: When combat has ended, adventurers can quickly restore their strength with a short rest, or take an extended rest to get back to full health, fully refresh their powers, and reset their action points.

About 5 minutes long, a **short rest** consists of stretching and catching one's breath after an encounter. When a character takes a short rest, the character regains the use of any encounter powers he or she used in the encounter, so they are available for the next encounter. After a short rest, a character can spend as many of his or her healing surges as the player wants.

At least 6 hours long, an **extended rest** includes relaxation, sometimes a meal, and usually sleep. A character can take an extended rest only once per

day; after finishing the rest, the character has to wait 12 hours before beginning another one. A character normally sleeps during an extended rest, but doesn't have to. The character can engage in light activity that doesn't require much exertion.

At the end of an extended rest, a character regains any lost hit points and any spent healing surges. The character also regains the use of all his or her encounter powers and daily powers. The character loses any unspent action points, but starts fresh with 1 action point.

Encounter Rewards: Typical encounter rewards are experience points (XP), action points tied to milestones, and treasure. Chapter 6 discusses each kind of reward in detail. It's up to you to decide whether you want to award XP after each encounter or at more natural break points—either when the characters take an extended rest or at the end of the game session. Quest rewards are best reserved for those break points, but you should give the characters treasure when they find it, of course, and award action points after each milestone (every two encounters).

WHEN IS AN ENCOUNTER OVER?

An encounter ends when the monsters or enemy characters stop fighting (usually because they are dead, captured, or have fled the battle). Typically, encounters are separated by a short rest, while the adventurers regain hit points and refresh encounter powers, and some amount of travel time—even if it's as little as crossing a room to open the next door. The next encounter begins when the adventurers engage new opponents. An encounter might instead be followed by an extended rest.

Effects that last “until the end of the encounter” never carry over from one encounter to another, as long as those encounters are separated by a short rest. Such effects actually last about 5 minutes, if no rest intervenes after their use. Thus, if adventurers use them outside combat, or plow through multiple encounters without taking a short rest, they enjoy their effects for the full 5 minutes.

What if the adventurers don't take a short rest? Sometimes they feel as though they can't—they have to get to the high priest's chamber before the assassin strikes! Sometimes they just choose not to, perhaps because they hope to enjoy the benefit of an effect that lasts until the encounter ends. In any event, starting a new encounter without the benefit of a short rest after the last one makes the new encounter more challenging.

If you're designing encounters in which you expect characters to move from one to the next without a rest, treat the two events as a single encounter. If the characters surprise you by running on to a new encounter without resting, it might be worth scaling back the new encounter a bit.



BUILDING ADVENTURES

When you build an adventure, you're building a frame to hang encounters on. Building that structure is a process of answering some simple questions.

You don't have to answer these questions in any particular order. You might start from a quest: One of your players wants a specific magic sword, so the adventure gives her a place to find that sword. A cool villain or monster might be the springboard for a setting or series of events. An interesting setting idea might call for particular inhabitants and plot. The climax might suggest a story leading up to it.

Components of an Adventure

Structure

- ◆ How does the adventure start and end?
- ◆ What happens in between?

Quests

- ◆ What is the situation?
- ◆ What led up to this situation?
- ◆ Does solving the situation require going somewhere?
- ◆ Does solving the situation require responding to events?
- ◆ Why do the adventurers care?
- ◆ What are the adventurers' goals?

Setting

- ◆ Where is the situation taking place?
- ◆ What is this setting's original purpose?
- ◆ What is the setting used for now?
- ◆ What kind of terrain and locations can you find there?
- ◆ What's interesting and dangerous there besides monsters?

Cast

- ◆ Who and what inhabits the setting?
- ◆ Does the adventure have a villain?
- ◆ Who else cares about the situation?
- ◆ Which characters are helpful, neutral, or hostile?

Adventures provide the framework on which to hang your encounters.

ADVENTURE STRUCTURE

All good adventures have a clear structure. Like a novel or a story, an adventure has a clear beginning, middle, and ending. Unlike a novel, the outcome of your story is determined by the actions of the adventurers, not your idea of how the story should resolve.

Beginning An adventure's beginning is a proposal of a problem, sometimes suggesting the adventure's end. An adventure can begin with a roleplaying encounter in which the adventurers find out what they must do and why. It can start with a surprise attack on the road, or the heroes stumbling upon something they were not meant to see. Whatever form it takes, the players should be hooked into the adventure by the time the beginning is over.

Reach out and grab the players with the adventure's beginning. If the adventure starts with someone asking the characters to do something for them, you are inviting them to say no. Players never say no to rolling initiative. Starting with action is a solid lead-in that clearly shows adventure is afoot.

Middle The middle of an adventure is where most of the action occurs. An adventure's middle might reveal new quests or change the goal altogether as the characters make discoveries. Whatever the case, a good middle requires the adventurers to make important choices and gives the sense that the adventure is building toward an end.

Ending The ending of an adventure speaks to the proposal of the beginning and the substance of the middle in a satisfying way. An ending is often a confrontation with a major villain, but it can also be a tense negotiation, a narrow escape, or the acquisition of a prize. Endings needn't be triumphant for the adventurers, but they should make sense in the larger context of the whole adventure.

Good Beginnings . . .

- ◆ Show the players that adventure is afoot.
- ◆ Make the players want to be involved, rarely forcing them.
- ◆ Are exciting but short—one game session.

Good Middles . . .

- ◆ Include a variety of challenges and clear choices.
- ◆ Build excitement, but give some time for reflection.
- ◆ Draw the players and the adventurers in and onward.

Good Endings . . .

- ◆ Tie together the beginning and middle.
- ◆ Fit with character actions and choices.
- ◆ Allow the players and characters to clearly see success or failure.
- ◆ Might provide new beginnings.

Good Structure Good structure makes use of the tenets of good beginnings, middles, and ends.

Hooks: From the beginning, players should want their characters to be involved in the challenge the adventure proposes. The “hook” used to pull the characters into the adventure must be compelling or personal, or both, to the players and their characters. Here is where knowing your players and their characters’ goals pays off. Use that knowledge to make compelling hooks.

Choices: Player and character choices must matter in a good adventure. Not only must they matter, but also in at least a few cases, those choices must be important to an adventure’s end. Your communication skills and information flow become especially important here (see Chapter 3: Running the Game). You must give the players enough information, even in simple situations, for them to make meaningful decisions.

Challenges: A good adventure provides varied challenges that test the adventurers and stimulate the players. Create different encounters to emphasize attack, defense, skill use, problem-solving, investigation, and roleplaying. Make sure the encounters invite the player behavior you want by drawing out and rewarding that behavior. Know the characters’ capabilities so you can build encounters that test those resources. More advice for building good encounters appears later in this chapter.

Excitement: The tension should build in a good adventure, whether its structure is event-based or setting-based. An event-based adventure focuses on the things the characters do rather than the places they go. A setting-based adventure makes the location the centerpiece for the action. See “Adventure Setting,” page 177.

Climax: Even the simplest adventures should have dramatically decisive moment when crucial knowledge or decisive action pays off, or the villain gets what’s coming to him. A sprawling dungeon complex or a long event-based adventure might have several such instances, with a big payoff at the ultimate end.

A tough fight doesn’t by itself constitute a climactic encounter. The last encounter should be the most fantastic and epic in the adventure. Don’t give the players an exciting encounter on a bridge with swinging blades and goblin archers mounted on worgs, and then let them kill the goblin king alone in a bare cave.

Meaningful Victory: Whatever the goal of the adventure, the characters’ success should be meaningful. Players should care about what happens if they fail.

Poor Structure Watch out for some common pitfalls that can wreck your adventure structure and leave your players dissatisfied or even angry.

Bottlenecking: Don't let the characters' ability to move forward in or complete the adventure hinge on a single action, such as finding the secret door to the villain's lair. If the characters don't find the door, the adventure comes to a grinding halt. Make sure that the characters can move ahead with the adventure in at least two different ways. Instead of punishing characters with a bottleneck if they fail to find the right clues, reward them with an extra edge if they do find those clues.

Railroading: If a series of events occurs no matter what the characters do, the players end up feeling helpless and frustrated. Their actions don't matter, and they have no meaningful choices. A dungeon that has only a single sequence of rooms and no branches is another example of railroading. If your adventure relies on certain events, provide multiple ways those events can occur, or be prepared for clever players to prevent one or more of those events. Players should always feel as though they're in control of their characters, the choices they make matter, and that what they do has some effect on the end of the adventure and on the game world.

Cluelessness: On the flip side, don't give the players so many options that they can't make any meaningful decisions. Even though that open-ended situation is far from railroading, too many options is still frustrating to the players. Give hints, nudge them however you like, but try to keep the action, the story, and the pace of the game going.

Sidelining: The player characters should always be the central heroes in the adventure. If NPCs can do everything the characters can, why are the characters even on the adventure? Along similar lines, don't bring in a powerful character as a *deus ex machina* to save the adventurers from disaster. The player characters should take the consequences and reap the rewards of their actions.

Squelching: DUNGEONS & DRAGONS game characters are powerful, and as their powers grow, it is harder to build encounters to challenge them. Know what the characters are capable of, and then design to reward the clever use of those powers. Don't resort to weird effects that shut down the characters' capabilities.

Anticlimax: An unsatisfying end to an adventure can be a real disappointment to the players. Make sure to end the adventure with a bang and a big payoff.

QUESTS

Quests are the fundamental story framework of an adventure—the reason the characters want to participate in it. They’re the reason an adventure exists, and they indicate what the characters need to do to solve the situation the adventure presents.

The simplest adventures revolve around a single quest, usually one that gives everyone in the party a motivation to pursue it. More complex adventures involve multiple quests, including quests related to individual characters’ goals or quests that conflict with each other, presenting characters with interesting choices about which goals to pursue.

Using Basic Quest Seeds

When you’re devising a simple adventure, one to three basic seeds are enough to get you started. A classic dungeon adventure uses three: The characters set out to explore a dangerous place, defeat the monsters inside, and take the treasure they find. One simple quest can be enough, such as a quest to slay a dragon.

You can combine any number of basic seeds to create a more multifaceted adventure. The more seeds you throw in the mix, the more intricate your adventure will be. You might add timing elements to one or more of the seeds to create more depth in your adventure.

Once you have your seed or seeds, you can start getting specific. Go back and answer the questions in “Components of an Adventure” on page 169, keeping your quest seeds in mind. Again, you don’t need to follow any particular order. You might come up with a set of monsters you want to use first, you might invent a cool place or item, or you might choose a seed or three. You can then use the “Adventure Setting” section of this chapter to help flesh out your adventure.

Basic Quest Seeds

Adversaries

- ◆ Capture
- ◆ Compete with to accomplish another task
- ◆ Defeat
- ◆ Discover hidden
- ◆ Drive away
- ◆ Escape from
- ◆ Hide from
- ◆ Infiltrate
- ◆ Thwart activities or plans

Allies, Extras, and Patrons

- ◆ Escort to a location
- ◆ Establish a relationship with
- ◆ Help perform a specific task
- ◆ Hide or protect from attack, kidnapping, or other harm
- ◆ Rescue from existing danger
- ◆ Settle a debt

Major Quests

Major quests define the fundamental reasons that characters are involved. They are the central goals of an adventure. A single major quest is enough to define an adventure, but a complex adventure might involve a number of different quests. A major quest should be important to every member of the party, and completing it should define success in the adventure. Achieving a major quest usually means either that the adventure is over, or that the characters have successfully completed a major chapter in the unfolding plot.

Don't be shy about letting the players know what their quests are. Give the players an obvious goal, possibly a known villain to go after, and a clear course to get to their destination. That avoids searching for the fun-aimless wandering, arguing about trivial choices, and staring across the table because the players don't know what to do next. You can fiddle with using another secret villain or other less obvious courses, but one obvious path for adventure that is not wrong or fake should exist. You can count on the unpredictability of player actions to keep things interesting even in the simplest of adventure plots.

Thinking in terms of quests helps focus the adventure solidly where it belongs: on the player characters. An adventure isn't something that can unfold without their involvement. A plot or an event can unfold without the characters' involvement, but not an adventure. An adventure begins when the characters get involved, when they have a reason to participate and a goal to accomplish. Quests give them that.

Basic Quest Seeds

Events

- ◆ Deal with the aftermath
- ◆ Flee or hide from ongoing weird or harmful
- ◆ Mistaken identity
- ◆ Prevent or stop weird or harmful
- ◆ Transported to a strange place
- ◆ Win a contest, race, or war

Items or Information

- ◆ Deliver to a place or person
- ◆ Destroy, perhaps by a particular method
- ◆ Hide
- ◆ Retrieve for an ally or patron
- ◆ Recover for personal use

Locations

- ◆ Escape from
- ◆ Explore
- ◆ Protect from attack or damage
- ◆ Seal off
- ◆ Secure for another use
- ◆ Survive in

Minor Quests

Minor quests are the subplots of an adventure, complications or wrinkles in the overall story. The adventurers might complete them along the way toward finishing a major quest, or they might tie up the loose ends of minor quests after they've finished the major quest.

Often, minor quests matter primarily to a particular character or perhaps a subset of the party. Such quests might be related to a character's background, a player goal, or the ongoing events in the campaign relevant to one or more characters. These quests still matter to the party overall. This game is a cooperative game, and everyone shares the rewards for completing a quest. Just make sure that the whole group has fun completing minor quests tied to a single character.

Sometimes minor quests come up as sidelines to the main plot of the adventure. For example, say the adventurers learn in town that a prisoner has escaped from the local jail. That has nothing to do with the main quest. It pales in importance next to the hobgoblin raids that have been plundering caravans and seizing people for slaves. However, when the characters find and free some of the hobgoblins' slaves, the escaped prisoner is among them. Do they make sure he gets back to the jail? Do they accept his promise to go straight—and his offer of a treasure map—and let him go free? Do they believe his protestations of innocence and try to help him find the real criminal? Any of these goals can launch a side quest, but clearly the adventurers can't pursue all of them. This situation gives them the opportunity to roleplay and make interesting choices, adding richness and depth to the game.



Designing Quests

Design quests so that they have a clear start, a clear goal, and clear consequences. Any quest should provide a ready answer for when the players ask, “What should we do now?”

Level Give the quest a level based on how difficult it is to accomplish. A good rule of thumb is to set the quest at the level you expect the characters to be when they complete it. For example, if completing a quest requires overcoming several encounters well above the party’s level, the average level of those encounters is a fine level for the quest.

Start A quest’s start is where the adventurers begin the quest if they choose to accept it. It might be a person who assigns the quest. It might be an observation they make that leads them to adopt a quest of their choosing. It’s a point of reference that the players can refer to and that the characters might be able to return to.

Goal The goal of a quest is what the adventurers have to accomplish to succeed on the quest. Goals should be as clear as you can make them. Goals can change as the characters uncover information, but such changes should also be clear.

Outcome The reward for success and the cost of failure should be or become clear to the players and their characters. Like goals, outcomes can change over the course of an adventure as the adventurers expose the truth.

No Redundant Quests Don’t reward the characters twice for the same actions. Quests should focus on the story reasons for adventuring, not on the underlying basic actions of the game—killing monsters and acquiring treasure. “Defeat ten encounters of your level” isn’t a quest. It’s a recipe for advancing a level. Completing it is its own reward. “Make Harrows Pass safe for travelers” is a quest, even if the easiest way to accomplish it happens to be defeating ten encounters of the characters’ level. This quest is a story-based goal, and one that has at least the possibility of solution by other means.

Conflicting Quests You can present quests that conflict with each other, or with the adventurers’ alignments or goals. The players have the freedom to make choices about which quests to accept, and these can be great opportunities for roleplaying and character development.

Player-Designed Quests You should allow and even encourage players to come up with their own quests that are tied to their individual goals or specific circumstances in the adventure. Evaluate the proposed quest and assign it a level. Remember to say yes as often as possible!

ADVENTURE SETTING

Vault of the Drow, the *Tomb of Horrors*, the *Forge of Fury*, and the *Keep on the Shadowfell*—all of those names describe two things: adventures published over the last 30 years of DUNGEONS & DRAGONS game history, and the settings in which those adventures take place. One element that all the best adventures share is a compelling and evocative setting. When you're building an adventure, think about what makes an awe-inspiring and memorable setting.

One good way to think about setting is to work backward: imagine a great climactic battle against the ultimate villain of the adventure. You don't need to have any idea who that villain is just yet, but thinking about the setting might give you ideas. Of course, if you have a villain in mind, that might inspire setting ideas as well. If you want your players fighting a red dragon in that last encounter, something volcanic or otherwise fiery is a good starting point. Alternatively, if some fantastic terrain inspires you, run with that. Perhaps you want to set that great climactic battle in an enormous Underdark cavern where two mighty armies of drow clashed centuries ago, staining the rock with their accursed blood. From that starting point, you could build an expansive Underdark adventure that eventually leads the characters into that cavern and its blood rock.

Types of Settings

Adventure settings in the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS game world tend to fall into four categories. The first consideration in thinking about a setting is what type of setting you want: an underground “dungeon,” a wilderness environment, a city or other settlement, or a fantastic different world (or plane of existence).

Underground Many DUNGEONS & DRAGONS adventures revolve around a dungeon setting. The word “dungeon” might conjure images of dry, bare stone corridors with manacles on the walls, but dungeons in the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS game also include great halls built into the walls of a volcanic crater, natural caverns extending for miles beneath the surface of the earth, and ruined castles that provide gateways to other planes.

Underground settings are such a staple of DUNGEONS & DRAGONS adventures because dungeon environments are cleanly defined, separated from the outside world and set apart as a special, magical environment. More important, dungeons physically embody good adventure design: they offer choices (branching passages and doorways) but not too many choices. They're limited environments that clearly define the options available. The rooms and corridors constrain the adventurers' movement, but the adventurers can explore them in any order they choose, so they have a feeling of control and meaningful choices.

Many dungeons are ancient ruins, long abandoned by their original creators and now inhabited only by monsters looking for underground lairs or humanoids setting up temporary camps. Some undying remnants of the original inhabitants might also linger in the ruins—undead, constructs, or immortal guardians set in

place to keep watch over treasures or other important locations. The dungeon's rooms might contain hints of their previous purpose—rotting remnants of furnishings piled together into giant rat nests, or faded tapestries hanging behind a crumbling throne. Rumors of ancient treasures or artifacts, historical information, or magical locations might lure adventurers into these ruins.

Other dungeons are currently occupied, presenting a very different sort of environment for the adventurers to explore. Whether they originally created the dungeon or not, intelligent creatures now inhabit it, calling its chambers and passages home. It might be a fortress, a temple, an active mine, a prison, or a headquarters. The inhabitants organize guards to defend it, and they respond intelligently to the characters' attacks, especially if the characters withdraw and return later. Characters might fight or sneak their way into an occupied dungeon to discover the secrets of an underground cult, stop the orcs from pillaging nearby towns, or prevent a mad necromancer from animating undead legions to conquer the barony. Or they might seek to reclaim the ancient dwarven fortress from the goblins that have taken it over, making it safe for habitation once again.

Sometimes dungeons are built to hold something—whether a mighty artifact or the body of a revered ruler—and keep it safe. A dungeon might also serve as a prison for a powerful demon or primordial that couldn't be destroyed at the time. These dungeons are usually sealed, often trap-laden, and sometimes inhabited only by monsters that can survive the passage of ages—undead, constructs, immortal guardians, devils, or angels.

Some dungeons aren't built at all. They're sprawling networks of natural caverns stretching deep below the earth. Taken as a whole, this expanse of naturally occurring dungeon is called the Underdark. It is an almost lightless region of subterranean wilderness. Within those caverns, adventurers might find cities of the drow, ruins of long-forgotten dwarf strongholds, or the hidden tomb of a mind flayer lich. Many kinds of monsters call the Underdark home, making it among the most dangerous areas of the world.

Finally, many dungeons combine two or more of these elements. For example, imagine that the dwarves of an ancient civilization built a sprawling subterranean complex where they thrived in splendor for many years. Then they dug too deep. Their tunnels opened into the natural caverns of the Underdark. Some horrible evil emerged from the lightless depths and destroyed the dwarven civilization. Centuries later, most of the original complex lies in ruins. Here and there among its sprawling passages, though, ragged bands of degenerate dwarves, enclaves of scheming drow, and a tribe of savage orcs have made their homes, and they live in a perpetual state of war against each other. Somewhere in the ruins is the tomb of the last dwarf queen, said to hold the mighty *Axe of the Dwarvish Lords*. Lastly, the ruins still connect to the Underdark. All four dungeon types come together in this single dungeon.

Wilderness Not every adventure has to take place in a dungeon. A trek across the wilderness to the heart of the Blackmire or the Desert of Desolation could be an exciting adventure in itself.

When designing a wilderness adventure, it helps to think of the great outdoors as a big dungeon. The adventurers should have a destination in mind, so that helps make the route they will take predictable. Roads, paths, and terrain features can channel the characters along predefined paths, rather than allowing them to wander freely around a vast and open map. The adventurers still have plenty of choices—from simple choices such as whether to walk along the bottom or the top of a gorge, to larger choices such as whether to skirt the edge of the swamp or cut through the middle, taking days off the journey but exposing the characters to greater danger.

In cases where the terrain doesn't channel the characters to specific locations, think about the adventure in more of an event-based structure, with encounters connected by a flowchart of events and choices rather than defined by geographical location.

Most wilderness areas should seem familiar but have fantastic elements. The creatures flitting among the branches of the Wyrmlaw Forest might be tiny dragonets rather than birds. They're not any more dangerous than birds (until the characters encounter a pack of ambush drakes), but they add a fantastic and flavorful element to the wilderness environment. Once in a while, though, break up the familiar wilderness with truly wondrous locations: trees that hover above the ground and send roots snaking through the air, auroras of many-colored light dancing in the depths of a lake, coldfire flames cascading across the surface of a glacier, or a swamp filled with pools of acid.

Civilized From the smallest village to the largest metropolis, urban environments offer limitless opportunities for adventure. Humanoids make the most cunning and devious foes, and NPCs found within the boundaries of the adventurers' hometown are often the most memorable villains.

Urban settings need not be mundane—not any more than wilderness or dungeon areas. Wealthy citizens might ride hippogriffs between the towers of the upper-class families. A mysterious local wizard might live in a tower floating above the city. The storm sewers might crawl with wererats or hide a secret enclave of yuan-ti. The baron might be a rakshasa or a doppelganger. Magic and danger don't always come from normal humanoid threats.

Adventures based in settled areas don't usually focus on exploring a location and killing its inhabitants. However, cities can hold mini-dungeons (such as the yuan-ti's sewers or the floating tower of the rakshasas) that combine elements of underground and urban settings. City adventures also work well as event-based adventures in which the setting is a backdrop for the unfolding drama.

Planar The world is not the only dangerous place full of dungeons. The Shadowfell and the Feywild hold countless opportunities for even low-level adventurers to seek treasure and glory, and the Elemental Chaos and the dominions of the Astral Sea are proving grounds for the most powerful characters. These different worlds offer the most magical, fantastic settings for DUNGEONS & DRAGONS adventures. The Elemental Chaos is full of mountains floating through

the air, stone slabs drifting on rivers of liquid fire, and clouds of pure lightning. The dominions of the gods in the Astral Sea are as different as the deities themselves, from Zehir's Endless Night to Pelor's shining palace at the pinnacle of Celestia.

Planar adventures sometimes resemble wilderness adventures with more fantastic terrain. However, such adventures have plenty of opportunities for dungeon exploration—the fey Labyrinth of Eldren Faere or the Endless Crypts of Morth Dire in the Shadowfell—and even urban encounters in the City of Brass or the Bright City.

Setting Personality

A great way to think about the setting for your adventure is to imagine its personality. A dungeon built as a hobgoblin stronghold has a very different flavor from an ancient temple-city inhabited by yuan-ti, and both are different from a place where the alien energy of the Far Realm has warped and twisted all life into aberrant forms. A setting's personality lends its flavor to the adventure as a whole.

Deciding on a setting's overall personality helps you create all the little details that make it come to life. That said, here and there you can throw in elements that don't fit the overall theme. While fighting their way through the hobgoblin stronghold, if the adventurers find a secret door leading to an ancient shrine to Bahamut built by the dungeon's original creators, they get a sense of a bigger world beyond their adventures, a taste of history, and a larger view of the dungeon's place in the world.



Creator and Inhabitants A setting's creator and current inhabitants can have a profound impact on the personality of that setting. A forest haunted by monstrous spiders is a very different place from one where the Feywild draws near the world and the fey lead their hounds on monthly wild hunts. An ancient dwarven stronghold takes on a different flavor when a minotaur cult moves into its ruins.

When large creatures create dungeons or cities, they build things to scale. A fortress crafted by titans can be hard for humans to negotiate, even if only goblins and dire rats inhabit it now. On the flip side, adventurers (except halflings) find a kobold warren to be close quarters. The difference between grand battles in the stately halls of the titan ruins and running skirmishes in the cramped tunnels of the kobolds leads to a marked difference in the personality of those two settings.

Some other fundamental elements of a setting's structure can be shaped by the nature of its creator. A lost temple of the yuan-ti, choked by overgrown jungle plants, might use ramps instead of stairs. A place carved by beholders would use empty shafts to connect different levels. Flying creatures in general approach the construction and use of their lairs very differently from land-bound creatures, potentially creating challenging dungeons for adventurers to explore.

A setting's environment might also be closely related to who built it or lives in it. A fortress built into the side of an active volcano might have been built by fire giants or be inhabited by salamanders. A towering palace of ice in the frigid northern wastes could be the work of ice archons, or it might be a temple to the Raven Queen. These are cases in which distinguishing between the setting's original creator and its current inhabitants can be very interesting. Perhaps dwarves built the volcano fortress, but they were wiped out when the volcano erupted a hundred years ago. Now the volcano is home to salamanders. Or its current inhabitants could be relatively normal creatures that rely on magic to keep them protected from the volcano's heat and ongoing activity.

Cultural details, at both a large scale and a small one, bring a setting's personality to life in your players' minds. Great bearded faces carved on the doors of a dwarven stronghold (perhaps defaced by the orcs who live there now), spiderweb decorations in a citadel of the drow, grisly battle trophies impaled on spears around a gnoll camp, and a statue of Pelor in the ruined temple are all details that tell the adventurers something about who built the setting or who currently inhabits it. Cultural details such as these can also tie different settings together, perhaps suggesting an interesting storyline. Imagine that in three different dungeons, all the gold coins the adventurers find were minted by the ancient tiefling empire of Bael Turath. Does this cultural detail hint at some historical element linking these three dungeons?

A more dramatic sort of cultural detail has to do with the types of rooms or buildings you might find in the setting. A drow stronghold might have pens for slaves, a number of torture chambers, and elaborate temples to Lolth. A kobold warren or dragonborn ruin might have egg incubation chambers. An expansive complex with a dusty library and museum has a different feel from one full of armories, barracks, and prisons.

History Many of the elements just discussed speak to the setting's history. The race or culture that originally created a dungeon gives it a great deal of its personality, and the history of the site between its creation and the present is no less significant.

The DUNGEONS & DRAGONS game world has a glorious history of expansive empires and prosperity. In the present day, the empires of the past lie in ruin, replaced by petty baronies and vast expanses of lawless wilderness. This world has endless opportunities for adventure: ancient ruins to explore, lost treasures to be recovered, savage hordes to drive away from settled lands, and terrible monsters haunting the dark places of the world. The exact history of your own campaign world, of course, is yours to design if you so choose, but these basic assumptions make for a world of opportunity from the adventurer's point of view.

Does this dungeon hold the last ancient monster of its kind, a powerful being that fiercely defends its last stronghold? Were its long-dead rulers the last known possessors of the Regalia of the Seven Kingdoms? Was it built as a prison for a primordial or demon prince whose influence still lingers in the place? Do the residents of the city in the remote jungle not know that the empire of Nerath has fallen? These are all ways you can tie the history of a setting into adventures you place there, shaping its flavor and feel.

A word of warning: Let background be background. Unless the background is essential to your adventure, don't spend a lot of time detailing the history of a dungeon in exhaustive detail. Use history to spice up the setting and provide the interesting details that help bring it to life in the players' minds, then move on to focus on the adventure.

Environment Sometimes a setting's surroundings give it all the personality it needs. A ruined castle in the Shadowfell, a monastery drifting through the Elemental Chaos, or the classic dungeon built into an active volcano are all settings that have a distinct personality regardless of their history or inhabitants. You might find inspiration in the jungle-choked ruins of Angkor Wat or decide to create a coral labyrinth in a tropical sea. The environment in these cases is the primary element of the setting's personality, which you can then enhance by choosing the right inhabitants and creating an appropriate history.

Atmosphere A subtle but important way to communicate your setting's personality to the players is through the background sensory details you use in your descriptions—the ambience the adventurers experience in the place. Remember to consider all five senses, as well as harder-to-define gut feelings and emotional responses characters might have to the setting. As the adventurers enter a natural cavern complex, they might see a dim blue glow radiating from the walls, hear the distant dripping of water, smell the slightly acrid scent of wet earth, and feel the cool air even as the weight of the earth and stone above them seems to press down on their spirits. When they creep down the stairs of an ancient crypt, describe the dust-covered cobwebs, skittering beetles, dry air,

and perhaps the haunting sense of a presence deep within the tomb that watches their every move, anticipating their arrival.

You don't need to pile atmospheric details into your very first description of an adventure setting. Make a note of the ambience of the place, perhaps listing a variety of details that might appear to every sense, and break them out to add some flair to your narratives as the adventure progresses.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

An adventure's cast—the monsters and nonplayer characters involved—brings it to life. Cast members are tools that facilitate the game. Many cast members are monsters or NPCs for the adventurers to face and defeat. They require little work aside from placing them in encounters and a little attention to behavior that makes them interesting to roleplay. Others are extras directly involved with the adventurers—employers and other support characters who require at least a little detail for roleplaying purposes. Still others are unique villains or monsters that require statistics and roleplaying details you create.

Every cast member has a purpose, a reason for appearing in the adventure. The most fundamental purposes are straightforward: Is the character an ally or patron to the adventurers, their enemy, or an extra with a walk-on role? When you populate your adventure, you can give some of the cast notable purposes. However, such purposes are relevant only if they'll matter to the adventurers. Don't bother with such details if no way exists for the adventurers to interact with them.

Sometimes a cast member can serve multiple purposes, and the purposes of some cast members can change as a reaction to the adventurers' actions or events in the world. An ally or patron could become an enemy, or fade into the background and become a mere extra. Enemies can reconcile and even become allies.

Allies

An ally is a cast member that helps the adventurers in some way, large or small. Allies come in all sorts, from the sagacious peasant who knows and can relate all the local legends, to the guard captain who fights alongside the adventurers as they hold off the hobgoblin invaders. Allies don't need to give their help for free, but they often do.

Allies can serve a number of roles in an adventure. An ally might be an explorer who shares her maps with the adventurers or guides them through the wilderness. Or he might be the priest the characters turn to when they need a *resurrection* performed. A deity might even assign an angel of protection to ward a character on a particularly dangerous and important adventure. If you plan a twist in your game, an ally might have darker qualities that make the ally later become an enemy.

Patrons

A patron employs the characters, providing help or rewards as well as hooks to adventure. Most of the time, a patron has a vested interest in the characters' success and doesn't need to be persuaded to help. However, circumstances or hidden schemes might make a patron cagey or even treacherous. A patron might cease to care about the adventurers after they complete a particular task. Let these circumstances guide the detail you give a patron. A name and a few choice interactions are all you need for a patron who serves as an adventure hook, but you might need further facets for a recurring patron—or one who might become an ally or enemy. At the least, give some thought to why the patron wants what he does and why he hires the characters to pursue his goals instead of doing it himself.

Enemies

Enemies oppose or hinder the adventurers. Simple monsters are enemies, as are dastardly villains you make up. Most enemies need combat statistics more than roleplaying details, although an enemy in a skill challenge might need more extensive personality notes and motivations. Enemies who play a significant role in an adventure—the villains featured in climactic encounters, as well as recurring villains who vex the characters in adventure after adventure—should always be more than their combat statistics. They don't need extensive personal histories that explain why they became so evil, but tales of their past evils can be a good way to build player anticipation for that climactic battle. A memorable personality, preferably something that becomes apparent before the final battle, also brings a villain to life. Mocking verses, in flowery language, scrawled in blood beside each victim speak volumes about the villain the characters seek.

Also consider the motivations of an important enemy. Is he an evil cultist who offers sacrifices to Orcus in a cellar shrine? A scheming mastermind who plans to take over the barony? A mercenary criminal who does anything if the price is right? A crazed lunatic who delights in torture with no real purpose? Villains with different motivations can give very different flavor to the adventures they appear in.

Extras

Extras are characters that exist to make the world seem more real. In a movie, they're the people in the background that the main characters rarely interact with. The duke's servants, townsfolk who witness (and scatter away from) a street brawl, and tavernkeepers are extras. In a *DUNGEONS & DRAGONS* game, you might keep basic and short notes on extras you think might become part of a brief encounter. Many DMs make up extras on the spot when the adventurers go somewhere unexpected. Often you need to know only what kinds of extras to expect in an area of your adventure or settlement.



Creating NPCs

Nonplayer characters are the supporting cast in the drama that stars your players' characters. Creating NPCs helps to bring your adventures and your campaign to life, creating a world that seems real.

NPCs are typically humanoid beings with a clearly defined purpose in your campaign and distinctive personalities. One might be a paladin of the Raven Queen who stalks the land, a gloomy figure who could become enemy or ally. Another is the scheming cleric of Asmodeus who leads the god's hidden cult, the main antagonist of your adventure. Both have a strong flavor based on their class and their connections to other parts of the world.

That said, no NPC needs the depth of background, personality, and statistics that a well-crafted player character has. Many NPCs just need a name, a couple of skills, and a word or two about their place in the world and how it relates to the adventurers. A good middle ground is to compose seven sentences that summarize an NPC's essential elements to help you use the NPC in a meaningful and memorable way.

Occupation: Introduce the NPC, describing the character's way of life.

Physical Description: Provide a brief summary of the NPC's appearance: height and build, color of skin, hair, and eyes, and so forth. Also think about a distinctive quirk to help set the character apart in the players' minds.

Attributes and Skills: Note whether any of the NPC's abilities are markedly above or below average—great strength or monumental stupidity, for example. You should also mention any special skills he or she has, even if they're not associated with the character's occupation.

Values and Motivations: Summarize the values that the NPC holds dear, and what spurs him or her to action. These factors can have an impact on the party's interaction with that person. These details also help you decide how the NPC reacts to the adventurers.

Behavior: Describe how the NPC interacts with others—traits that will stand out in the players' minds. An NPC might be urbane, sarcastic, loud and obnoxious, soft-spoken, or condescending. If this behavior is applied differently depending on who you are, note that here.

Useful Knowledge: Does the NPC know something that might benefit the adventurers? This information might be purely for flavor, or it could be a key clue leading the characters deeper into the adventure.

Mannerism: Describe a memorable characteristic of the NPC, something for the players to remember. They might forget a name, but they'll remember the blacksmith with the elaborate vocabulary.

NPC QUIRKS

d20	Quirk
1	Distinctive jewelry (earrings, necklace, bracelets)
2	Piercing
3	Flamboyant or outlandish clothes
4	Formal or very clean clothes
5	Ragged and very dirty clothes
6	Pronounced scar
7	Missing tooth
8	Missing finger
9	Unusual eye color (or two different colors)
10	Tattoo
11	Birthmark
12	Unusual skin color
13	Bald
14	Braided beard or hair
15	Unusual hair color
16	Nervous eye twitch
17	Distinctive nose
18	Distinctive posture—crooked or very rigid
19	Exceptionally beautiful
20	Exceptionally ugly

NPC MANNERISMS

d20	Mannerism
1	Is prone to singing, whistling, or humming quietly
2	Speaks in rhymes or meter
3	Has particularly low or high voice
4	Slurs words, lisps, or stutters
5	Enunciates very clearly
6	Speaks loudly
7	Whispers
8	Uses flowery speech or long words
9	Frequently uses the wrong word
10	Uses colorful oaths and exclamations
11	Constantly makes jokes or puns
12	Is prone to predictions of certain doom
13	Fiddles and fidgets nervously
14	Squints
15	Stares into distance
16	Chews something
17	Paces
18	Taps fingers
19	Bites fingernails
20	Twirls hair or tugs beard

ENCOUNTER MIX

When you're building an adventure, try to vary the encounters you include, including combat and noncombat challenges, easy and difficult encounters, a variety of settings and monsters, and situations that appeal to your players' different personalities and motivations. This variation creates an exciting rhythm. Adventures that lack this sort of variety can become a tiresome grind.

Complexity

Encounters can be complex in several different ways. An encounter with five different kinds of monsters is complex for the players and for you, so mix those up with more straightforward encounter types, such as groups made up of a single kind of monster.

Some encounters are complex in their relationship to the plot, such as a tangled interaction in which the adventurers have to unravel each adversary's motivations and hidden agendas, or even a combat encounter that raises new questions about what's going on in the adventure. Make sure to mix those up with encounters in which it's completely clear what's going on.

Rooms with lots of interesting terrain, cover, and room features make for great combat encounters, but you should keep some variation in that level of complexity. You don't have to resort to a straight-up, face-to-face melee in a tiny room, but some encounters can be less tactically interesting than others.

Difficulty

If every encounter gives the players a perfectly balanced challenge, the game can get stale. Once in a while, characters need an encounter that doesn't significantly tax their resources, or an encounter that makes them seriously scared for their characters' survival—or even makes them flee.

The majority of the encounters in an adventure should be moderate difficulty—challenging but not overwhelming, falling right about the party's level or one higher. Monsters in a standard encounter might range from three levels below the characters to about three levels above them. These encounters should make up the bulk of your adventure.

Easy encounters are two to three levels below the party, and might include monsters as many as four levels lower than the party. These encounters let the characters feel powerful. If you build an encounter using monsters that were a serious threat to the characters six or seven levels ago, you'll remind them of how much they've grown in power and capabilities since the last time they fought those monsters. You might include an easy encounter about once per character level—don't overdo it.

Hard encounters are two to four levels above the party, and can include monsters that are up to five levels above the characters. These encounters really test the characters' resources, and might force them to take an extended rest at the

end. They also bring a greater feeling of accomplishment, though, so make sure to include about one such encounter per character level. However, be careful of using high-level soldiers and brutes in these encounters. Soldier monsters get really hard to hit when they're five levels above the party, and brutes can do too much damage at that level.

Monsters that are more than eight levels higher than the characters can pretty easily kill a character, and in a group they have a chance of taking out the whole party. Use such overpowering encounters with great care. Players should enter the encounter with a clear sense of the danger they're facing, and have at least one good option for escaping with their lives, whether that's headlong flight or clever negotiation.

On average, it takes a character eight to ten encounters to gain a level, with the possible addition of a major quest. For a group of nine encounters, here's how they might be broken down.

ENCOUNTER DIFFICULTY

Level of Encounter	Number of Encounters
Level - 1	1 encounter
Level + 0	3 encounters, 1 major quest
Level + 1	3 encounters
Level + 3	1 encounter

Fantasy

The DUNGEONS & DRAGONS game is all about fantasy, so don't feel restricted by realism when coming up with weird and interesting adventure elements. Allow movies, video games, and other media to inspire you. Imagine cool encounter situations and locales, and then include them in your adventure.

That does not mean that every encounter has to be incredibly fantastic. Some monsters provide all the fantasy an encounter needs. Fighting a dragon is such a staple of the fantasy genre that you can't forget you're playing a fantasy game in the middle of that battle. On the other hand, encounters with humanoid monsters such as orcs and bugbears can start to feel mundane, and those encounters can use a fantasy injection. A floating cloud castle or similar fantastic location, an add-on monster such as a rage drake or a manticore, or a strange magical effect such as shifting shadow tendrils that provide concealment—these elements remind the players that their characters live in a fantastic world that doesn't obey the natural laws of the real world.

Monsters

In addition to using different monster groups to vary the complexity of your encounters, try to vary the kinds of monsters the adventurers face in ways that are more basic as well. Don't fill a dungeon with nothing but humanoid monsters, at the risk of losing the sense of fantasy and wonder. Make sure to include

minions and solo monsters from time to time, so not every fight pits five adventurers against five monsters. Use different encounter templates (page 203), and vary the composition of those groups as well, using controllers and soldiers for some encounters, artillery and brutes for others.

You can also create variation within the same kinds of monsters, which is particularly useful when the story of the adventure seems to demand a lot of battles with the same kinds of monster. When the characters strike into the hobgoblin stronghold, use the different hobgoblins presented in the *Monster Vault* (as well as goblins and bugbears), make sure to include plenty of nonhumanoid guard monsters. The hobgoblin leader might be a vampire or a mummy. Or he could be a solo monster, a whirlwind of flashing blades and killer moves. Or he could be some kind of aberrant monstrosity dredged from your worst nightmares. The players will remember that encounter for years.

NPCs

Memorable nonplayer characters are best built on stereotype. The subtle nuances of an NPC's personality are lost on the players. Just don't rely on the same stereotype for every NPC you make. Not every villain has to be a cackling megalomaniac, not every ally is honest and forthright, and not every bartender is loud and boisterous. Variety in NPCs is the spice of your adventures and lends depth to your campaign.

Traps and Hazards

Not every combat encounter consists only of monsters and terrain. Include traps as part of monster mixes as well as traps that stand alone as encounters in their own right. Other hazards add spice to encounters as well. Don't overlook these components of encounter design, but don't overuse them, either. Monsters are the staple of *DUNGEONS & DRAGONS* game encounters for a good reason. They're exciting, tactically challenging, and visually interesting.

Fun

Fun is one element you shouldn't vary. Every encounter in an adventure should be fun. As much as possible, fast-forward through the parts of an adventure that aren't fun. An encounter with two guards at the city gate isn't fun. Tell the players they get through the gate without much trouble and move on to the fun. Niggling details of food supplies and encumbrance usually aren't fun, so don't sweat them, and let the players get to the adventure and on to the fun. Long treks through endless corridors in the ancient dwarven stronghold beneath the mountains aren't fun. Move the adventurers quickly from encounter to encounter, and on to the fun!

ENCOUNTER AS STORY

Whether or not an encounter involves combat, a well-crafted encounter is a key scene in the story of your adventure and the overarching story of the characters in your campaign. If an adventure is like a structured fantasy story, sharing a similar dramatic structure with novels, movies, and even plays, then an encounter is a scene in that story, a discrete element in which tension builds in steady increments toward the climax of the adventure.

Viewed as part of a larger story, a great encounter has three key ingredients:

- ◆ It has history. It builds on what the characters have learned in past encounters and previous game sessions.
- ◆ It has a clear objective, something the characters are trying to accomplish.
- ◆ It has a significant outcome. The characters might overcome the challenge with ease, squeeze past it by the skin of their teeth, or fail the challenge entirely. The outcome matters, and helps to set up later encounters.

Building on the Past

A strong encounter builds on information the adventurers acquire in the course of previous encounters and exploration. Another way of looking at this is to turn it on its head: You'll build stronger encounters if you work to foreshadow what's coming, laying the groundwork for later encounters in the earlier sessions of an adventure.

Introducing information about an encounter ahead of time builds anticipation or apprehension. For example, if you know the climactic battle in an orc-filled adventure features the brutal orc chieftain and his ogre bodyguard, you might have orcs in earlier encounters name the chieftain and speak fearfully of the ogre. When one orc suggests running from the adventurers' onslaught, another says, "No! Angarr will feed us to the ogre if we flee!"

Laying the groundwork for future encounters can also give the players information that will help them succeed in those encounters. For example, say your party seeks an audience with a grand duke who has no tolerance for rudeness or insolence. You can simply tell the players when they meet him that the duke is frowning and looks condescending. Obviously, this description is a bad sign for the party and should keep the adventurers on their toes. But even better, in a previous encounter the characters might hear that the grand duke recently imprisoned someone who was rude to him during an audience. This builds the players' anticipation as they prepare for the audience, and helps them avoid ending up in jail themselves.

You can use the same technique to prepare the characters for more or less random wilderness encounters. It's helpful to let players know what they should expect if they wander off the beaten path or stray into the nearby forest. Let them know that the woodfolk warn of deadly spiders or fey-haunted clearings. Armed

with information, they can make better decisions about whether to avoid or flee from monsters too powerful for them. Even better, they'll enter the dangerous forest with a sense of anticipation and tension that helps build your adventure toward its climax.

Setting Encounter Objectives

Players are generally quick to grasp the objective of an encounter when their characters face a horde of savage orcs. The adventurers are obviously fighting for their lives, trying to either kill all the orcs or escape from them. Other encounters have less obvious goals: "Let's question the tiefling diplomat and see if he knows something." Even if the goal is very straightforward, every encounter should have one. Without a clear goal in an encounter, your players are likely to end up frustrated or bored.

You can turn even a straightforward combat encounter into a significant story branching point by adding a secondary objective, something the characters need to do *in addition to* defeating the monsters in the encounter. The objective can actually define a more complex encounter: the adventurers must find an important clue, secure an alliance with a group of NPCs, or defeat a monster before it kills innocent bystanders or assassinates the baron.

Just as a quest—a clearly stated objective for an adventure—defines the story of an adventure, an encounter objective links the encounter into the adventure story. For example, if the adventurers are on a quest to deliver a precious relic to a remote monastery, most of the encounters along the way have the clear objective of protecting the relic from those who are trying to steal it. The encounters advance the story by informing the players about the evil forces seeking to acquire the relic, and they build toward a climactic showdown with the leader of those evil forces.

A clear objective also helps determine the consequences of success or failure in an encounter. If the characters' objective is to protect the relic from attacking lizardfolk, then failure might mean that they have to veer from their course to track down the successful thieves. Success, on the other hand, could mean that there are fewer lizardfolk in a later encounter, or it could mean that the characters must next face the black dragon that commands the lizardfolk.

Last but certainly not least, a clear objective can make even a straightforward combat encounter much more interesting. It can encourage the characters to move around the encounter area, and it can force them into difficult decisions about how they spend their actions and other resources.

Encounter Outcomes

A clear objective helps the players understand the consequences of success or failure in an encounter. In most encounters, failure is a pretty remote possibility, with the main question being *how* successful the characters are at dealing with the challenge of an encounter. There's typically a range of possibilities:

- ◆ The adventurers take advantage of their opportunities and deal with the threat swiftly. In a stunning success, they use up few of their resources and enjoy the rewards of the encounter with little down side.
- ◆ The adventurers overcome the obstacles facing them, but at a cost. They might just head into the next encounter with fewer healing surges or daily powers at their disposal. Worse, an enemy that fled the fight might raise the alarm (leading to tougher encounters ahead) or escape with important information. The characters still receive the rewards of the encounter, but they pay a price for their gain.
- ◆ The adventurers fail to overcome the encounter. They might flee from a combat encounter, or be captured by their enemies. Not only do they not receive any reward for the encounter, they also suffer a serious setback, and they might have to work long and hard to overcome the consequences of their failure.

The outcome of one encounter should lead logically to the next encounter. Success in an encounter carries the characters on a rising tide of exciting action toward the climax, as they get closer and closer to completing the overall goals of the adventure. Failure leads the characters to a new turning point—hopefully, an obstacle they can overcome so they’re back on the path toward success, not into an inescapable downward spiral of doom!

Sample Encounter Objectives

Here are some story-rich objectives that you can use as the foundation for complex and compelling encounters. These objectives are meant to focus on a single encounter during an adventure, but you can easily spin them out to cover multiple encounters that all combine to form one obstacle or problem the adventurers must overcome.

Make Peace Because of a misunderstanding, the adventurers find themselves fighting monsters or nonplayer characters that should be their allies. Perhaps the adventurers’ enemies have deceived the leader of the NPCs into attacking them, or the NPCs are simply xenophobic or territorial. For whatever reason, the potential allies are prepared to attack the party.

Objective: The adventurers must convince the members or the leader of the opposing group that they should be on the same side.

Possible Outcomes: The adventurers need allies, and their ability to talk is more useful in this encounter than their fighting talents. Unfortunately, if the party’s diplomatic attempts falter they are in for a fight. Here are some possible outcomes for this encounter:

- ◆ The adventurers manage to avert a fight entirely, prevent injury or loss of life on either side, and convince the NPCs to join their cause.
- ◆ Fighting breaks out for a few rounds, but the adventurers manage to convince the other side of their good intentions and stop the fight. One or both sides are bloodied or suffer casualties.
- ◆ The adventurers fail to secure the aid of the NPCs and break off the fight, opting to flee rather than harm these potential allies.
- ◆ The adventurers fail to secure the NPCs' aid and end up defeating them in combat, perhaps knocking them unconscious and taking them prisoner. At worst, they kill the opposing group and lose these potential allies.

Protect a Person or Item The adventurers are bodyguards, or they have an ancient or fragile item that they want to bring to a specific location. Every challenge they face puts the item at risk of breaking, or the character they're protecting at risk of injury, death, or discovery.

The nature of the nonplayer character the adventurers must protect can affect the difficulty of the encounter. For an easy encounter, the NPC is a smart, capable warrior. For a tougher encounter, the NPC is incompetent, keeps panicking in combat situations, and puts everyone at risk with dubious decisions. Alternatively, a more sympathetic NPC might be grievously injured, too young or old to fend for himself, or wracked by a horrid disease. Perhaps the adventurers are escorting the NPC to a destination where he can be cured of a crippling condition, creating the potential for an eager ally if the characters succeed at their quest.

If the adventurers are protecting an item, it might be an offering to seal an alliance with another group, or a religious icon that can end an internecine struggle that has torn apart a religious order. Any blow to the item could destroy it. The villains might send thugs after the adventurers with the sole intention of destroying the item.

Objective: Keep the NPC alive or the item intact for the duration of the encounter.

Possible Outcomes: While this might seem like an all or nothing encounter, there is plenty of room for a middle ground. Obviously, the adventurers fail if the NPC dies, although it might be possible to restore the character to life. The adventurers might achieve different degrees of success depending on whether the NPC gets injured in the fight, whether any of the party's enemies recognize the NPC, or whether the NPC completes a specific task before dying.

- ◆ The adventurers protect their charge by avoiding combat entirely, remaining hidden from their enemies or fleeing before their foes can engage them.
- ◆ The adventurers fight off the attackers and keep the NPC or item safe, keeping enemies away from whatever they're protecting.

- ◆ The adventurers keep the item or NPC safe, but their enemies see and identify the NPC or item and can use this information against them or the NPC in a later scene.
- ◆ The NPC survives, but suffers some injury. This injury might hinder the character's ability to perform the task he needs to accomplish, or otherwise diminish his usefulness to the adventurers.
- ◆ The item is broken but not completely destroyed. The adventurers can recover enough of the item that they can undertake a quest to repair it, or they can use it for its intended purpose but it's less effective.
- ◆ The adventurers keep the NPC alive just long enough for her to complete the task she needs to perform, but not long enough for her to give them a reward or important information they need for a later encounter. For example, the elderly sage might complete the process to seal the demongate, but then fall prey to a demon's claws before she can warn the adventurers of the threat she discovered in the course of her work.
- ◆ The NPC is captured or killed, or the item is lost or completely broken. The adventurers need to either reverse their failure (by rescuing or resurrecting the NPC or repairing the item) or find a new way to accomplish whatever they needed the NPC or item to do.

Retrieve an Object The adventurers need or want to reach a specific object in the room, preferably before any combat in the area is finished. Ideally, the enemies they face in the encounter should be either overwhelmingly powerful—creating a situation where the adventurers need to grab the object and either run or use its powers to protect themselves—or just as eager as the adventurers to acquire the item, so the encounter becomes a race to reach the item.

Objective: Reach and secure an object in the encounter area. Securing the object might mean pocketing a small item, activating the power of a site or large object in the room, opening a locked chest containing the object, and so on. The object might not be immediately visible, requiring the adventurers to search the area as the encounter proceeds.

Possible Outcomes: If the adventurers acquire the object, they succeed. If they don't, more possibilities open up.

- ◆ The adventurers retrieve the object and either escape with it or use it to defeat their enemies in the encounter.
- ◆ The adventurers get the object, get one use from it, and then lose it to their opponents. It helps them, but perhaps not as much as they really need.
- ◆ The adventurers fail to retrieve the item and must either chase the enemies who got it or find another way to achieve their goals without it.

Sneak In The adventurers need to get through the encounter area without raising an alarm. That could mean killing all the guards while making sure that none of them can reach the enormous gong at one side of the room, or it could mean sneaking through a maze of rooms without being detected.

Objective: Reach a destination or kill all the defenders without raising an alarm.

Possible Outcomes: The outcome of an infiltration encounter can have a dramatic impact on future encounters, even the rest of the adventure. If the characters succeed, they can bypass significant obstacles. If they fail, they face stiffer resistance in the encounters ahead.

- ◆ The adventurers are successful—no alarm is raised, and anyone who knows of their presence is dead or disabled.
- ◆ The adventurers fail to sneak through the area, and some guards attack them. This can actually lead to a second encounter with the same objective, as the adventurers try to defeat these guards before they can raise an alarm.
- ◆ One of the guards manages to alert more guards in the next room, turning one combat encounter into two encounters combined, making a much tougher fight.
- ◆ The guards sound an alarm. Reinforcements might arrive immediately, or the adventurers might find that future encounters are more difficult because the opponents are on guard and prepared for the adventurers' arrival—or both.



MONSTER ROLES

The key to designing interesting and varied groups of monsters for an encounter lies in the monster roles: artillery, brute, controller, lurker, skirmisher, and soldier. Each role has its own place in a typical encounter. The role of every monster is given in a monster entry at the top right of the creature's statistics block. Most combat encounters involve groups of monsters occupying different roles. A group of varied monsters makes for a more interesting and challenging encounter than a group of identical foes.

In the context of monster roles (here and elsewhere in the game rules), the terms “controller” and “leader” have different meanings and applications from the class roles of controller and leader, which describe how certain character classes function.

Artillery

Artillery monsters excel at ranged combat. These creatures rain arrows, explosive fireballs, and similar attacks on the party from a distance. They often spread damage out over multiple characters in an area.

Use artillery monsters in an encounter to hang behind soldiers and brutes and rain damage down on the adventurers from protected positions. Because they're more fragile than average monsters, they count on being protected by a line of brutes or soldiers, or skirmishers that help them to draw off attacks. They also work well behind terrain features that make it harder for characters to reach them—anything from difficult terrain to a gaping chasm.

Brute

Brute monsters specialize in dealing damage in melee. They deal a lot of damage with their attacks, and often shove characters around. They don't move around a lot, and they're often big.

Use brutes in an encounter to threaten the party while shielding other monsters with their great size and imminent threat. Brutes are easy to run, so put multiple brutes of the same kind in an encounter to provide the baseline muscle for the monsters.

Controller

Controller monsters manipulate their enemies or the battlefield to their advantage. They restrict enemy options or inflict lasting conditions, alter terrain or weather, or bend the minds of their adversaries.

Position controller monsters just behind a front line of melee-focused monsters, and use them to attack the adventurers at short range with their control powers. Most controllers can stand their ground in melee, so they often wade right in beside the brutes and soldiers. Controller monsters can be complex to

run in numbers, so limiting an encounter to one or two controllers of the same type is usually a good idea.

Lurker

Lurker monsters have some ability that lets them avoid attacks, whether by striking from hiding or by turning into an invulnerable statue while regaining strength. They usually deliver one devastating attack every few rounds, while concentrating on defense in between.

Use lurkers as surprise additions to encounters with other monsters or as sneaky assassins that circle around the main action of a fight, darting in from time to time with a well-timed strike. Lurkers study the party while the player characters are busy handling brutes and soldiers, gauging the adventurers' weaknesses.

Skirmisher

Skirmisher monsters use mobility to threaten the player characters. Use skirmishers as the mobile strikers in an encounter, the creatures that move to attack vulnerable adventurers from the sides and rear. They often have powers that let them dart in, attack, and retreat in one action. Skirmishers like to fight alongside soldiers and brutes because those monsters tend to stay in one place and draw a lot of the party's attention, giving the skirmishers room to maneuver around this front line.

Soldier

Soldier monsters specialize in drawing the adventurers' attacks and defending other monsters. They tend not to move around, and they often have powers that hinder other creatures from moving around them.

Use soldiers in an encounter to keep the party in place, preventing its members from attacking the artillery or controller monsters behind the soldiers or chasing after the skirmishers. Soldiers often have abilities that allow them to work well together, so a group of identical soldiers works well in an encounter with other monsters.

Special Types of Monsters

In addition to the six basic monster role, certain monsters fit into encounters in unusual ways. Minion monsters are weaker than normal monsters and count as 1/4 of a monster in encounter building, while elite and solo monsters are more powerful than normal and count as multiple monsters. Leader monsters aren't more or less powerful, but they have additional qualities that help them bolster other monsters in an encounter.

Minion Monsters Sometimes you want monsters to come in droves and go down just as fast. A fight against thirty orcs is a grand cinematic battle. The players get to enjoy carving through the mob like a knife through butter, feeling confident and powerful. Unfortunately, the mechanics of standard monsters make that difficult. If you use a large number of monsters of a level similar to the adventurers, you overwhelm them. If you use a large number of monsters of much lower level, you bore them with creatures that have little chance of hurting the adventurers but take a lot of time to take down. On top of that, keeping track of the actions of so many monsters is a headache.

Minions are designed to serve as shock troops and cannon fodder for other monsters (standard, elite, or solo). Four minions are considered to be about the same as a standard monster of their level. Minions are designed to help fill out an encounter, but they go down quickly.

A minion is destroyed when it takes any amount of damage. Damage from an attack or from a source that doesn't require an attack roll destroys a minion. If a minion is missed by an attack that normally deals damage on a miss, however, it takes no damage.

Use minions as melee combatants placed between the adventurers and back-rank artillery or controller monsters.



Elite Monsters Elite monsters are tougher than standard monsters and constitute more of a threat than standard monsters of their main role and level. An elite monster counts as two monsters of its level. Elite monsters are worth twice as many XP and are twice as dangerous. Elite monsters make great “mini-bosses,” allowing you to add a tougher opponent to a mix of monsters without creating an entirely new monster. A group of ogres led by an elite ogre reduces the number of ogre figures on the table without diminishing the encounter’s level.

Solo Monsters Solo monsters are specifically designed to appear as single opponents against a group of adventurers of the same level. They function, in effect, as a group of monsters. They have more hit points in order to absorb the damage output of multiple adventurers, and they deal more damage in order to approximate the damage output of a group of monsters.

A solo monster is worth the same amount of XP as five monsters of its level. It provides the same level of challenge as five monsters.

A solo monster might have tendencies that flavor it toward the brute, soldier, skirmisher, lurker, artillery, or controller role. Each type of chromatic dragon, for example, leans toward a different role. Red dragons have soldier tendencies, while blue dragons behave much like artillery monsters. However, a solo monster can never completely take on a different role, because the roles are largely defined by how monsters interact with other monsters in an encounter. Every solo monster has to be able to stand and fight on its own.

Leader Monsters “Leader” is not a stand-alone role. It is an additional quality or subrole of some brutes, soldiers, skirmishers, lurkers, artillery, and controllers.

Leaders are defined by their relationship to the monsters under their command. A leader monster, like a leader adventurer, grants bonuses and special abilities to its followers, improving their attacks or defenses, providing some healing, or enhancing their normal abilities. Aside from one special ability to enhance its allies, a leader functions as its primary role indicates.

Add a leader to an encounter with monsters that gain the greatest benefit from the leader’s abilities. For example, a leader that gives a defense bonus to nearby creatures is a great leader for brutes, who have weak defenses otherwise.

ENCOUNTER COMPONENTS

Building an encounter is a matter of choosing threats appropriate to the characters and combining them in interesting and challenging ways. The threats at your disposal include all the monsters in this book and the *Monster Vault*, monsters and nonplayer characters you find in published adventures, traps and hazards, and skill challenge elements. Encounter-building is a mixture of art and science as you combine these threats together.

Just as individual threats have a level that measures their danger, an encounter as a whole has a level. Build an encounter by choosing a level for the encounter. The level you choose determines the total XP reward you're aiming for. You then select threats (monsters, traps, or NPCs) until you reach the target number, which is the minimum number of XP that an encounter of a given level can contain.

Think of it as spending XP against a budget. The encounter level gives you an XP budget, and you "buy" individual monsters, traps, or other threats to build the encounter until you've exhausted your budget.

Encounter Level

A standard encounter should challenge a typical group of adventurers but not overwhelm them. The characters should prevail if they haven't depleted their daily resources or had a streak of bad luck. An encounter that's the same level as the party, or one level higher, falls in this standard range of difficulty.

You can offer your players a greater challenge or an easier time by setting your encounter level two or three levels higher or one or two levels lower than the party's level. It's a good idea to vary the difficulty of your encounters over the course of an adventure, just as you vary other elements of encounters to keep things interesting (see "Encounter Mix," page 188).

Encounter level is relative to the number of characters in the party. Published adventures show levels for encounters based on an assumed party size of five characters. However, notice that a 9th-level encounter for five characters (2,000 XP) is a 7th-level encounter for six characters or a 10th-level encounter for four.

Target XP Reward

To find your total XP budget, find the level of the encounter you want to build on the Target Encounter XP Multipliers table, and multiply the multiplier from the table by the number of characters in your adventuring party. For example, if you're building a 7th-level encounter, multiply 300 XP by the number of characters: 600 XP for two characters, 1,500 XP for five characters, or 2,100 for seven.

Spending Your XP Budget

The simplest way to spend your XP budget on an encounter is to use a number of monsters equal to the number of adventurers, with each monster's level equal

to the encounter level. If you're building a 7th-level encounter for five characters, five 7th-level monsters fit the bill perfectly. A solo monster of that level is also an ideal encounter all by itself.

You don't have to hit your XP target exactly. If you don't, just keep an eye on the XP targets for encounters a level above or below the level you chose. If you set out to build a 10th-level encounter for five characters (target XP 2,500), but you spend only 2,200 XP, you've created a 9th-level encounter.

Once you've picked the monsters and traps you want to use in your encounter, make a note of the total XP reward for that encounter. Keep it for the end of the encounter when you award XP to the players.

Level: As you select individual threats to make up your encounter, keep the level of those threats in mind. Monsters or traps more than four levels below the party's level or seven levels above the party's level don't make good challenges. They're either too easy or too hard, even if the encounter's level seems right. When you want to use a single monster to challenge the adventurers—or a large mob of monsters, for that matter—try using minions, elites, and solo monsters instead.

Roles: An encounter with a group of monsters that all have the same role is less interesting than one with a mix of roles. On the other hand, a group of five monsters with five different roles is *too* interesting—or, more to the point, too complex. A good rule of thumb is to pick a brute or soldier monster and use two or three of them to create the front line of the combat. Pick one or two monsters of other roles to round out the encounter.

When you start making encounters, this general rule makes for interesting combats. You can still create a great deal of variety by slightly adjusting encounters to take advantage of the strengths of the latter four roles.

TARGET ENCOUNTER XP MULTIPLIERS

Encounter Level	XP Multiplier
1	100
2	125
3	150
4	175
5	200
6	250
7	300
8	350
9	400
10	500
11	600
12	700
13	800
14	1,000
15	1,200
16	1,400
17	1,600
18	2,000
19	2,400
20	2,800
21	3,200
22	4,150
23	5,100
24	6,050
25	7,000
26	9,000
27	11,000
28	13,000
29	15,000
30	19,000

ENCOUNTER TEMPLATES

Here are templates you can fill in with monsters of your own choosing that combine different roles and levels into dynamic encounters.

Encounter Template Format: In each of these templates, the letter n represents the level of the encounter you want to build. The templates assume a party of five adventurers and work out to encounters of level n or level $n + 1$.

Battlefield Control

One controller monster with several skirmishers of similar level can limit the movement of its enemies without hampering its allies. The controller's ability to hinder enemies heightens the skirmishers' movement advantage. A terrain hazard (page 213) in which the monsters can move more easily than the adventurers can replace the controller.

Controller of level $n + 1$
6 skirmishers of level $n - 2$

Commander and Troops

One commander monster in charge (a controller or soldier, but a lurker or skirmisher could also serve) leads a number of troops. The troops are usually melee focused (brutes and soldiers), but more challenging Commander and Troops encounters can feature some strategic artillery support.

Commander of level $n + 3$
5 troops of level $n - 2$

Double Line

A front line of brutes or soldiers protects a rear line of artillery or controller monsters. The front-line monsters keep their opponents from breaking through to attack the others behind them. The artillery and controllers in the back line use ranged attacks and try to avoid contact with the enemy.

You can modify the template by using a skirmisher or lurker to replace one of the rear-line foes. The front-line monsters protect the artillery or controller, while the lurker or skirmisher circles around behind the opponents or otherwise seeks advantageous positions.

3 front line (brute/soldier) of level n
2 rear line (artillery/controller) of level n

Wolf Pack

Some creatures hunt in packs of their own kind. These creatures are often skirmishers, and they sometimes adopt special tactics meant to distract opponents and make best use of combat advantage. One or more members of the pack act as soldiers, forming a front line; the others remain mobile, flanking opponents and ducking out of harm's way when possible. When the front line gets worn down, those creatures revert to their skirmisher role as fresh ones take their place.

7 skirmishers of level $n - 2$
or 5 skirmishers of level n

Simple Substitutions

You can create endless variations from these encounter templates without making the encounters any more complicated.

Minion Monsters: To incorporate minions into an encounter, replace one standard monster with four minions of the same level. A Commander and Troops encounter takes on a different feel when you replace standard brutes or soldiers with several times their number of minions—a vampire lord surrounded by his brood of vampire spawn, for example, or a war devil with a regiment of legion devils.

Elite Monsters: To incorporate an elite monster into an encounter, replace two standard monsters with an elite monster of the same role and level. You can also replace a single monster with an elite monster of the same role and level and increase the encounter's level by one.

Solo Monsters: A solo monster is usually an encounter all by itself, but you can also use solo monsters as part of larger groups. Any encounter template that includes at least five standard monsters of the same level can feature a solo monster instead of those standard monsters, though the solo monster might change the feel of the encounter significantly. A standard Commander and Troops encounter could include a commander of level $n + 3$ and a solo monster of level $n - 2$, leaving open the question of who's really in command.

If you have a party that's larger or smaller than five characters, it works reasonably well to increase a solo monster's level by one for each additional character above five, or decrease it by one for each character below five. So, use a 10th-level solo monster for a group of six 9th-level characters, or an 11th-level solo monster for a group of seven.

Traps and Hazards: A well-placed trap or hazard can contribute just as much to an encounter as a monster, but the encounter feels quite different. Replace a monster with a trap or hazard of the same level. Traps and hazards often function as artillery (like a magic crossbow that launches bolts at the characters) or as controllers (presenting obstacles that restrict adventurer movement).

ENCOUNTER SETTINGS

An encounter that occurs in a small, bare dungeon room is hard to make memorable, no matter what the monsters in it are doing. To maximize the fun for everyone around the table, follow these guidelines when crafting the chambers, caverns, or battlefields for your encounters.

Room to Move

Your first consideration in crafting interesting encounter spaces is the size and shape of the room or encounter area and the placement of the monsters and adventurers.

Make sure everyone has enough room to move around. For most encounters, the minimum is an area roughly 8 to 10 squares on a side (which happens to be the size of the largest *D&D Dungeon Tiles*). For an important encounter, consider a space as large as 16 or 20 squares on a side (two 8-square-by-8-square dungeon tiles). A poster-size map like those included with the adventures in this box covers an area roughly 20 by 30 squares and makes a great area for a climactic battle. Folded in half (at about 15 by 20 squares), it also works well for other important fights.

Bigger Creatures Need More Space: Large and Huge creatures need more space. An encounter that includes Large monsters needs at least 16 squares by 10 squares. With Huge monsters, the encounter area should be at least 20 squares by 20 squares (or about three large *D&D Dungeon Tiles*). Gargantuan monsters work best on poster maps.

Interesting Areas

Symmetry is boring. Fighting in one square or rectangular room after another is dull and doesn't allow for much tactical variety. Let rooms branch out into corridors, alcoves, and antechambers, and find ways to draw some of the fighting into these areas. Also, build rooms using all three dimensions. Large platforms and raised areas, depressions and pits, along with galleries and overlooks, are interesting and can produce fun tactical situations.

Circular Paths: Try to create an area that suggests a continuous path of movement: a pair of rooms connected by two different hallways, a room split by a chasm spanned by two bridges, or a twisting maze of goblin warrens that are all interconnected. A single circular path like that allows for combat to unfold on multiple fronts. Once fighting begins in one area, either side can gain an advantage by circling around to approach from a different side.

Create even more dynamic encounter area in the basic shape of a figure eight—three or more larger areas connected to the others by multiple pathways. It's best with a figure eight to start the encounter with the adventurers in the middle, the room that's connected to both of the other rooms.

Fantasy It Up: Your goal is not to create a realistic area for your encounter.

Sprinkle fantastic features liberally throughout your encounters, and every once in a while put in fantastic features of cinematic scope. A room where the adventurers have to jump between floating platforms as they fight a wing of gargoyles, or avoid gouts of magma while fighting for their lives against a red dragon—those are encounter areas that take on a life of their own.

They reinforce in everyone's mind that the *DUNGEONS & DRAGONS* game is a fantasy game.

Enemy Tactics

All other things being equal, if the monsters don't move around, the adventurers have little reason to move around either. Move your monsters, even if it means that they take opportunity attacks. Sometimes, move monsters even when it means they miss a chance to attack. Monsters should always:

- ◆ Move out of positions where characters flank them
- ◆ Take cover from ranged attacks when possible
- ◆ Avoid hazardous terrain they could conceivably be aware of

Reasonably intelligent monsters should also:

- ◆ Move into flanking positions
- ◆ Take advantage of circular paths to outflank the party
- ◆ Make use of attractive terrain they know about

TERRAIN FEATURES

It's easy to overlook the effects of terrain when building adventures and encounters. After all, the party's enemies are the monsters, not the dungeon stairs, the low rock wall, or the crumbled statues in the dungeon room. Yet, terrain provides the context for an encounter. A mob of goblin archers is easy to defeat when only empty terrain lies between it and the party. Take the same goblins, put them on the opposite side of a wide chasm, and the adventurers face a much tougher challenge.

Terrain Effects

The rules of the game describe terrain in three general categories: difficult terrain, blocking terrain, and hindering terrain. As you think about terrain in encounters, you should also consider three other categories of effects that can apply regardless of terrain: movement challenges, obscuring effects, and cover.

Difficult Terrain Difficult terrain (page 128) slows down characters without blocking line of sight. In encounter design, difficult terrain is a useful tool to make a path less appealing without removing it as an option. It gives you some of the benefits of walls and other terrain that blocks movement without the drawback of constricting the party's options. It costs 1 extra square of movement to enter a square of difficult terrain.

Too much difficult terrain proves frustrating, since shifting and attacking becomes impossible. Use difficult terrain in small quantities. The ideal patch of difficult terrain is just big enough to force the adventurers to spend an extra round moving down a particular path or taking a position in an encounter area.

Avoid using much, if any, difficult terrain in areas where you expect the adventurers and monsters to fight in melee. Difficult terrain prevents shifting, which can turn a melee into a static slugfest. That might make for an occasional change of pace, but it makes the game boring if it happens too often.

Examples: Rubble, uneven ground, shallow water, forest undergrowth, fallen trees, a steep slope, swampy ground.

Blocking Terrain Blocking terrain (page 127) prevents movement and blocks line of sight. The adventurers might be able to use the Athletics skill to climb over such obstacles, but otherwise this type of terrain prevents movement.

Blocking terrain channels the encounter's flow and cuts down on the range at which the adventurers can attack the monsters (and vice versa). Using blocking terrain, you can present two or three distinct paths in an encounter area and different challenges down each one. For example, the adventurers come under attack when they enter an intersection. Orc warriors charge down two corridors, while an orc shaman casts spells from a third. If the adventurers charge the shaman, they risk attack from two sides. If they fall back, they can meet the warriors along one front, but the shaman is safely away from the melee.

Don't use too much blocking terrain. Fights in endless narrow corridors are boring. While the fighter beats on the monster, the rest of the party must rely on ranged attacks.

Examples: Walls, doors, impassable rubble.

Hindering Terrain Hindering terrain (page 128) prevents movement (or severely punishes it) or damages creatures that enter it, but allows line of sight.

Hindering terrain can be interesting because it encourages ranged attacks. You can shoot an arrow over hindering terrain, while it is impossible or risky to run through it to attack in melee.

Too much hindering terrain makes creatures that use melee attacks worthless. It is best used to protect a monster or two, or as a favorable defensive position that the adventurers can exploit.

Examples: Pits, deep water, lava, fire.

Movement Challenges Some clear, difficult, or hindering terrain requires a skill check or ability check to cross. Fail the check, and something bad happens to you. This kind of terrain makes skills more important. It adds an active element of risk to the game.

Athletics checks and Acrobatics checks are often required for movement challenges. Moving across slick ice might require Acrobatics. Slogging through deep mud might require Athletics. Running over a thin beam would use Acrobatics. Use the Difficulty Class by Level table, page 107, to select a relevant DC for the party's level.

A successful check allows a creature to move normally despite the challenge (which might mean moving at half speed, if the underlying terrain is difficult).

The type of challenge determines what happens when characters fail their checks. Climbing characters might fall. Characters wading through mud must pay 1 extra square of movement to enter the square. Characters moving across ice fall prone in the first square of ice they enter.

Too many movement challenges terrain wear down the party or slow the action if the characters have a few unlucky skill checks.

Examples: Ice, deep mud, thin beam across a chasm.

Obscuring Effects Obscuring effects provide concealment and block line of sight if a target is far enough away from you. However, it has no effect on movement.

Lightly Obscured: Squares of dim light, foliage, fog, smoke, heavy falling snow, or rain are lightly obscured. A target in a lightly obscured space has concealment.

Heavily Obscured: Squares of heavy foliage, heavy fog, or heavy smoke are heavily obscured. A target in a heavily obscured space but adjacent to you has concealment. A target in a heavily obscured space and not adjacent to you has total concealment.

Totally Obscured: Squares of darkness are totally obscured. A target in a totally obscured space has total concealment.

Obscuring effects lend a sense of mystery to an encounter. The characters can't see what lurks ahead, but their enemies have open space they can move through to attack. It restricts ranged attacks like blocking terrain does, but it allows more movement. Encounters are a little more tense and unpredictable.

Obscuring effects become a problem when they shut down the fight. The characters likely stick close together, and if the monsters can ignore the effect due to some special property they possess, the fight might be unfair rather than tense.

Examples: Fog, mist, zones of magical darkness.

Cover Terrain elements that provide cover, such as trees or walls, make ranged attacks more difficult.

Cover forces ranged attackers to move if they want to shoot around it. It also helps creatures avoid ranged attacks.

Too much cover makes the encounter too difficult for ranged attackers.

Examples: Low walls, piles of rubble, large trees.

Sample Fantastic Terrain

The DUNGEONS & DRAGONS game world is rife with magic, and this power spawns wondrous terrain. Massive spiderwebs choke ancient passages. Elemental energy surges through a cavern, granting strength to fire-based spells.

Tier and Terrain Effects: Throughout these examples, the term “per tier” is used to show how an effect should scale. Multiply the per tier value by one for heroic tier, two for paragon, and three for epic. If a terrain feature grants a +1 bonus to attack rolls per tier, the bonus is +1 at heroic tier, +2 at paragon tier, and +3 at epic tier. Similarly, some terrain effects call for skill or ability checks. Choose an Easy DC from the Difficulty Class by Level table, page 107, to set a DC that’s appropriate to the character’s level.

Terrain scales in order to keep it relevant as adventurers and monsters gain higher skill bonuses and hit points. The cave slime found in the deeper reaches of the Underdark is thicker and more slippery than the thin sheens found in higher dungeon levels, so the Acrobatics DC to avoid falling is higher.

Blood Rock The site of ceremonial sacrifices, a great slaughter, or some other calamity, the spirit of death hovers over blood rock.

Effect: A creature standing in a square of blood rock can score a critical hit on a natural die roll of 19 or 20.

Usage: Blood rock makes encounters slightly more unpredictable, which usually favors the monsters. You can use a large expanse of it to make everyone score critical hits more often, or use just a few squares of it and let the adventurers and monsters fight over who gets to stand on it.

Bolt Stone In some areas, lightning energy fuses with rock to form a highly unstable, dangerous mixture. In various regions of the Elemental Chaos, and in dungeons located near the conflux of different types of elemental energy, blue-tinted areas of bolt stone appear.

Effect: When a creature enters a square of bolt stone, it takes 5 lightning damage per tier. Roll a d20; on a 10 or higher, the bolt stone’s energy is discharged, and the stone becomes inert. Otherwise, the lightning energy is transferred to all unoccupied squares adjacent to the origin square, and those squares become bolt stone.

Usage: Bolt stone works best when you scatter it across an encounter area. It offers some risk and reward. A player character might enter a square and take the damage in the hope of creating a barrier to hold back monsters or eliminate minions.

Cave Slime This thin, blue slime is harmless but extremely slick.

Effect: A creature that enters a square filled with cave slime must succeed on an easy Acrobatics check or fall prone.

Usage: Use cave slime to shield artillery monsters from the characters. Skirmisher monsters that can fly or that excel at Acrobatics might dart back and forth across a patch of cave slime, defying adventurers to follow them.

Defiled Ground The dead do not always rest in peace. Some cemeteries are darker than others, and ancient events leave unseen traces of their former presence. Defiled ground sometimes attracts undead.

Effect: Undead gain a +1 bonus to rolls to recharge their powers while on defiled ground. In addition, if an undead creature is reduced to 0 hit points while on defiled ground, roll a d20; on a 10 or higher, the undead creature is not destroyed and rises with 1 hit point on its next turn. If radiant damage reduces an undead creature to 0 hit points, it can't rise again in this manner.

Usage: Defiled ground makes undead encounters somewhat more dangerous. Use it for encounters that are meant to have a feel of horror, or to evoke the atmosphere of a site sacred to undead, such as a temple to Orcus.

Fey Circle Often distinguished by the presence of tangled vines or large toadstools, this location is empowered with the extraordinary energy of the Feywild.

Effect: A creature can spend a minor action while in a fey circle's square to teleport 5 squares.

Usage: A fey circle can add unpredictability to a combat area, and it can level the playing field somewhat when the player characters are fighting monsters that teleport—or when monsters familiar with the circle face adventurers who teleport all the time. A fey circle is also a great addition to an encounter area that features a treacherous chasm or similarly dangerous terrain, giving the adventurers a way to bypass the danger if they can figure out the purpose of the fey circle.

Illusions Illusions can mimic any terrain. Creatures that realize that an object is an illusion ignore its effects, while those that do not realize the truth behind the illusion react to it as appropriate. Use characters' passive Insight checks to determine if they notice something "not right," but don't allow them to make active checks without good reason. Once a character has reason to be suspicious, he can make an Insight check as a minor action to attempt to disbelieve an illusion.

Illusions don't do any actual damage, and interacting with them might reveal their true nature. For example, an adventurer who walks into an illusory pit doesn't fall to the ground. At that point, the character realizes the pit is fake.

Illusory Wall: An illusory wall blocks line of sight. Creatures can walk through it without penalty, though obviously creatures that believe the illusion aren't likely to try doing so. Some illusory walls are similar to one-way mirrors in that they are transparent from one side (allowing a viewer to see creatures on the other side) while from the other side they appear to be normal walls (blocking line of sight, and looking like normal wall terrain).

Mirror Crystal Mirror crystal causes strange twists and turns in space.

Effect: A creature standing on mirror crystal can look down and see all the other mirror crystal spaces within 20 squares. Creatures can make ranged attacks through mirror crystal, targeting any creature on or adjacent to another square of mirror crystal. The range to a creature attacked through mirror crystal is 1 square.

Usage: Start an encounter with artillery monsters hidden from sight but positioned on squares of mirror crystal. Then watch as the players figure out how to return the monsters' fire!

Slides A slide is coated with a slick substance and designed to send characters tumbling, offering quick transport at a price.

Effect: A slide is difficult terrain. A creature that enters a slide square must make an Acrobatics check. A creature that fails immediately moves to the end of the slide, falls prone, and ends its move.

Usage: Use a slide with skirmisher monsters that can handle the Acrobatics checks and take advantage of the slides to move around quickly.

Spiderwebs Enormous spiders haunt the underground regions of the world, sometimes leaving sticky webs behind long after they themselves are gone.

Effect: The webs of giant spiders are difficult terrain. A creature that enters a spiderweb must make an Athletics check or an Acrobatics check or become immobilized. Trapped creatures can use the escape action to free themselves from the web. A spiderweb square is lightly obscured.

Usage: Don't use spiderwebs only in encounters with giant spiders—they can also be interesting terrain in fights against either mobile monsters or monsters with push and slide effects. An ogre might try to push the party rogue into a spiderweb to make him stand still.

Using Terrain

The best use of terrain in a combat encounter is to encourage the adventurers and the monsters to move around. A static fight, where the combatants settle into fixed positions in the first round of combat and never move thereafter, is a less interesting fight than one where the adventurers and monsters are in near-constant motion.

One great way to get characters moving around is to create locations where they clearly want to be. Such locations might include advantageous terrain, a place behind cover (in an encounter against monsters with ranged attacks), or in a defensive position. It might also involve an objective of the encounter, such as an object in the room that the adventurers need to reach for some reason.

The classic example of advantageous terrain is a bottleneck location where outnumbered adventurers can limit the number of monsters that can attack them at one time. Five characters facing a horde of angry minions get a clear advantage from retreating into a 10-foot-wide corridor where two minions at a time face up against the party defenders while the rest of the party makes ranged attacks or assists the front-line defenders. Getting into that position can be an interesting, dynamic couple of rounds—but once the characters are there, you don't want them to hole up there until all the minions are dead. At that point, the enemy tactics need to change.

Difficult or dangerous terrain, as well as traps and hazards, can often hinder, discourage, or punish movement, so use them carefully. Use these features in conjunction with other ways of encouraging movement to make that movement more interesting (and possibly dangerous), or use them in conjunction with forced movement to add excitement to powers that push, pull, or slide. It's best if both the monsters and the adventurers have access to some forced movement powers, so the fight involves a lot of maneuvering for the best position to push enemies into the hazardous terrain. However, don't overlook the value of hazardous terrain as a way to simply let the players feel good about the forced movement powers they've chosen for their characters.

A third way to use hazardous terrain or traps is to have the danger move around the encounter area, encouraging players to keep away from it as it goes. Terrain examples might include a lava flow, a drifting cloud of noxious gas, a slowly spreading fire, or motes of raw chaotic energy that dart around the area and teleport creatures they touch (and deal some damage in the process).

You can move dangerous terrain in a regular pattern, which lets the players feel smart about avoiding it. But you should also feel free to move it where you think it will have the most impact on the scene, to force the players (and you!) out of combat inertia and get them to move. You can use moving terrain to give an advantage to either side of the combat, to make the outcome of the battle feel uncertain all the way to the bitter end.



Finally, dangerous terrain can actually prove an irresistible draw to some players if it comes with the potential for both risk and reward. For example, bolt stone (page 209) damages an adventurer who enters its space, but there's a chance that its discharge will create more bolt stone around it, hurting any enemies that move adjacent to the adventurer. For certain players (especially those who like to use the environment to their advantage), the potential payoff is worth the little bit of damage. However, in order for this kind of terrain to attract characters, they have to understand how it works. You can plant clues in the environment or let characters make Dungeoneering checks to identify terrain features—and make sure you tell them about the benefits as well as the hazards.

TRAPS AND HAZARDS

One wrong step in an ancient tomb triggers a series of scything blades that cleave through armor and bone. The seemingly innocuous vines that hang over a cave entrance grasp and choke at anyone foolish enough to push through them. A narrow stone bridge leads over a pit filled with hissing, sputtering acid. In the *DUNGEONS & DRAGONS* game, monsters are only one of many challenges that adventurers face.

If it can hurt the party, but it isn't a monster, it's either a trap or a hazard.

Trap or Hazard?

What's the difference between a trap and a hazard? Traps are constructed with the intent to damage, harry, or impede intruders. Hazards are natural or supernatural in origin, but typically lack the malicious intent of a trap. Though both feature similar risks, a pit covered with a goblin-constructed false floor is a trap, while a deep chasm between two sections of a troglodyte cave constitutes a hazard.

Traps tend to be hidden, and their danger is apparent only when they are discovered with keen senses or a misplaced step. The danger of a hazard is usually out in the open, and its challenge determined by the senses (sometimes far too late) or deduced by those knowledgeable of the hazard's environs.

The common link between traps and hazards revolves around peril—both to adventurers and monsters. Because of this similarity, traps and hazards feature similar rules, conventions, and presentations.

A few basic rules govern a trap or a hazard, unless noted otherwise.

Targeting a Trap or a Hazard: A trap or a hazard is usually an object or a terrain feature, and most powers target creatures, enemies, and allies. Despite that fact, a trap or a hazard counts as a creature for the purpose of targeting. You might decide that certain powers cannot be used on a trap or a hazard, regardless of this rule.

Some traps and hazards have no defenses, whereas others have some defenses but not others. A trap or a hazard is immune to attacks against any defense it lacks. For example, if a trap has no Will, it is immune to attacks against Will.

No Opportunity Attacks Provoked: Traps and hazards don't provoke opportunity attacks (page 159). Provoking such an attack usually represents dropping one's guard, and the attentiveness of a trap or a hazard does not vary.

Perceiving Traps and Hazards

When an adventurer is within line of sight of a trap or a hazard, compare the adventurer's passive Perception to the Detect DC of the trap or the hazard, which is noted in its statistics block. A character whose passive Perception is equal to or higher than the DC notices the danger or some part of it. Other skills might play a role in allowing characters to notice traps or hazards, such as Arcana, Dungeoneering, and Nature. An exceptional trap or hazard might even be undetectable to Perception.

Characters have the option of making Perception checks to find traps or hazards. They usually do so only when you have given some hint that a trap or a hazard might be present.

Triggering Traps and Hazards

Traps and hazards act without a hint of intelligence, so their behavior is predictable, even if it's sometimes random. A trap is constructed to go off when certain conditions are met—from a character stepping on a pressure-sensitive flagstone in the floor to intruders entering the evil temple without wearing the symbol of the deity it's dedicated to. The text of a trap entry explains when and how the trap activates.

The Powers of Traps and Hazards

Traps and hazards have powers, just as monsters do, and their powers follow the normal rules for powers. Most trap powers and hazard powers are attack powers. A blade cuts across the corridor, making melee attacks. Flames shoot out in close blasts. Rubble drops from the ceiling in an area burst. Arrows shoot out from the wall, making ranged attacks.

Countering Traps and Hazards

While the best way to counter a trap or hazard is to avoid it, sometimes that's not possible. That leaves adventurers with three approaches to countering the obstacle: break it, disable it, or outsmart it.

Destroying a trap or hazard with a weapon or attacks is often difficult, if not impossible—arrow traps are typically protected by walls or shielding, magic traps have a habit of blowing up when attacked, and very few attacks can counter that huge boulder rumbling down the corridor. But attacking and destroying a trap may be the best way to defeat it in a pinch.

Most traps can be disabled with the Thievery skill. Sometimes other skills and abilities can supplement the Thievery check. Disabling a trap takes the trap out of commission until someone makes the effort to repair or reset it. While it's disabled, the trap effectively isn't there. The statistics block of a trap or a hazard notes if it can be disabled and provides the DC for doing so.

Characters can also outsmart a trap or a hazard. Figuring out a trap's location and avoiding the pressure plates is a sure way of doing this, but more subtle and interesting methods sometimes apply. Many traps have interesting countermeasures other than destroying, or disabling them that make it possible for a variety of characters to foil or even defeat them.

Placing Traps and Hazards

Traps and hazards fit into an encounter much like an additional monster. Every trap or hazard has a level (and an appropriate XP value for that level), so you can figure it in as part of an encounter that includes monsters to determine the appropriate reward for defeating it. For example, an encounter for five 10th-level adventurers might include four 10th-level monsters and one 10th-level trap. Defeating the trap, just like defeating the monster, earns the party 500 XP.

Sample Traps and Hazards

The following pages present an assortment of traps and hazards at various levels.

False-Floor Pit A pit is dug or built into the floor of the room and covered with a false floor—flagstones balanced over timbers, a simple carpet thrown over the hole in the floor, or a complex mechanism that triggers when weight is placed on it. When a creature walks on the false floor, it opens and drops the creature down 10 feet into the pit. A pit is typically 2 squares by 2 squares in size.

A creature in the pit can climb out with a successful Athletics check. Characters can also use Athletics to jump over the pit if they know where it is.

False-Floor Pit		Level 1 Trap
Object		XP 100
Detect Perception DC 19	Initiative –	
Immune attacks		
TRIGGERED ACTIONS		
↓ Attack ♦ Encounter		
<i>Trigger:</i> A creature enters one of the trap's four squares.		
<i>Attack (Immediate Reaction):</i> Melee 1 (triggering creature); +4 vs. Reflex		
<i>Hit:</i> The target falls 10 feet to the bottom of the pit, taking 1d10 damage and falling prone.		
<i>Miss:</i> The target returns to the last square it occupied and its movement ends immediately.		
<i>Effect:</i> The false floor opens and the pit is no longer hidden.		
COUNTERMEASURES		
♦ Disable: Thievery DC 19. <i>Success:</i> The false floor is jammed closed and the trap cannot attack.		

Rockslide Rocks fall from a collapsing ceiling or down a steep slope to bury unsuspecting creatures. The trigger for a rockslide can be random, caused by the actions of others, or timed. When it is triggered, the rockslide rolls initiative. Between the trigger and the rockslide's attack, characters in the area know that a rockslide is beginning and the area it will affect.

The rockslide fall to the same target square as long as the attack continues.

Rockslide		Level 1 Hazard
Terrain		XP 100
Detect Nature or Dungeoneering DC 19	Initiative +3	
Immune attacks		
STANDARD ACTIONS		
← Attack ♦ Recharge ☐☐☐☐☐☐		
<i>Attack:</i> Close burst 3 (creatures in burst); +4 vs. Reflex		
<i>Hit:</i> 2d6+6 damage.		
<i>Miss:</i> Half damage.		
<i>Effect:</i> The area of the burst becomes difficult terrain.		
<i>Special:</i> As soon as the attack fails to recharge, the rockslide is over and does not attack again.		

COUNTERMEASURES

- ◆ **Avoid:** A creature that takes damage from the rockslide can use an immediate interrupt to take advantage of natural openings in the slide to avoid damage by making a DC 25 Nature or Dungeoneering check. With a successful check, a creature takes half damage (or no damage if missed).

Spear Gauntlet Five hidden spears thrust upward from the floor in response to pressure, each in a separate square. When a creature steps on a trigger plate or starts its turn on one, all five spears thrust upward.

Characters can ready actions to attack the spears, or attack the trigger plates to disable them. But the best countermeasure is simply to avoid the spears—while maneuvering enemies to stand on trigger plates.

Spear Gauntlet**Level 2 Trap**

Object

XP 125

Detect Perception DC 20**Initiative** –

HP 10 per spear, 30 per trigger plate

AC 13, **Fortitude** 10, **Reflex** 10, **Will** –**Immune** necrotic, poison, psychic, forced movement, all conditions, ongoing damage**TRIGGERED ACTIONS**◆ **Attack** ◆ **At-Will***Trigger:* A creature enters one of the trigger squares or starts its turn there.*Attack (Opportunity Action):* Melee 1 (each creature on a trigger square); +7 vs. AC*Hit:* 2d8 + 6 damage.**COUNTERMEASURES**

- ◆ **Disable:** Thievery DC 20. *Success:* A single trigger square and its associated spear no longer function.

Magic Crossbow Turrets A pair of armored crossbow turrets drop down from the ceiling and loose bolts at intruders in the room. The trap activates and rolls initiative when a character enters one of the trigger squares in the room. Typically, four trigger plates are positioned just inside the entrance to a chamber.

Magic Crossbow Turret**Level 3 Trap**

Object

XP 150

Detect Perception DC 13**Initiative** +3

HP 38

AC 16, **Fortitude** 13, **Reflex** 13, **Will** –**Immune** necrotic, poison, psychic, forced movement, all conditions, ongoing damage**STANDARD ACTIONS**☞ **Attack** ◆ **At-Will***Attack:* Ranged 10 (one or two creatures); +8 vs. AC*Hit:* 1d8 + 3 damage.**COUNTERMEASURES**

- ◆ **Disable:** Thievery DC 21. *Failure (10 or less):* The turret attacks the disabling creature as a free action.

Pendulum Scythes Scything blades sweep across the room in a seemingly random pattern, cutting swaths at 5-foot intervals. The blades are set up to sweep along specific rows of squares when the trap is activated. On each of the trap's turns, one of the blades swings out, attacking a single row of squares determined randomly.

The trap is triggered and rolls initiative when characters enter the room or step on trigger plates within it. Between the trigger and the trap's first attack, the sound of grinding gears and metal grating on stone can be heard.

Pendulum Scythes		Level 4 Trap
Object		XP 175
Detect Perception DC 21	Initiative +6	
HP 48		
AC 15, Fortitude 12, Reflex 12, Will –		
Immune necrotic, poison, psychic, forced movement, all conditions, ongoing damage		
STANDARD ACTIONS		
‡ Attack † At-Will		
Attack: Melee 0 (each creature in a row of squares); +9 vs. AC		
Hit: 1d10 + 2 damage, and ongoing 5 damage (save ends). In addition, the blade pushes the target 1 square (in the direction of the blade's movement) and knocks the target prone.		
COUNTERMEASURES		
♦ Disable: Thievery DC 21. <i>Success:</i> One blade is disabled, rendering one row of squares safe from attack.		
♦ Predict: Dungeoneering DC 21 (minor action). <i>Success:</i> The creature can determine the row of squares the trap will attack on its next turn.		

Whirling Blades A whirling mass of blades rises out of a hidden compartment and spins wildly around the room, slicing into any creature that comes too close. The trap is triggered and rolls initiative when a character steps on a trigger plate. On each of its turns, the whirling blade contraption moves toward the nearest creature and attacks.

The clearest way to disable the trap is to destroy the contraption of whirling blades. However, there might also be a secret control panel (requiring a DC 22 Perception check to find) that allows a character to disable the trap with one or more successful Thievery checks (DC 22).

Whirling Blades		Level 5 Trap
Object		XP 200
Detect Perception DC 22	Initiative +7	
HP 55		
AC 16, Fortitude 13, Reflex 13, Will –		
Resist 5 all; Immune necrotic, poison, psychic, all conditions, ongoing damage		
Speed 4		
STANDARD ACTIONS		
↔ Attack † At-Will		
Attack: Close burst 1 (creatures in burst); +10 vs. AC		
Hit: 1d8 + 5 damage.		

Poisoned Dart Wall Poison-coated darts fire from the wall, hurtling toward intruders. The trap is triggered when a character pulls a tripwire, usually by walking through the entrance into a hallway or chamber. Each round on its turn, the trap looses a barrage of poison darts at every creature in the area.

Poisoned Dart Wall	Level 6 Trap
Object	XP 250
Detect Perception DC 23	Initiative +7
Immune attacks	
STANDARD ACTIONS	
↩ Attack (poison) ♦ At-Will	
Attack: Close blast 5 (creatures in blast); +11 vs. AC	
Hit: 1d6 damage, and ongoing 5 poison damage (save ends).	
COUNTERMEASURES	
♦ Disable: Thievery DC 23. <i>Success:</i> The creature disables the tripwire before the trap is triggered.	

Glyph of Warding An arcane symbol scribed into a wall or door slows and explodes when a character tries to open the warded object or portal.

Glyph of Warding	Level 7 Trap
Object	XP 300
Detect Perception DC 27, Arcana DC 23	Initiative –
Immune attacks	
TRIGGERED ACTIONS	
↩ Attack (varies) ♦ Encounter	
Attack: Close burst 3 (creatures in burst); +10 vs. Reflex	
Hit: The glyph is designed with one of the following effects:	
♦ 3d6 + 4 fire or acid damage, and ongoing 5 fire or acid damage (save ends).	
♦ 3d6 + 4 cold damage, and the target is immobilized (save ends).	
♦ 3d6 + 4 lightning or thunder damage, and the target is dazed (save ends).	
♦ 3d6 + 4 necrotic damage, and the target takes a -2 penalty to attack rolls (save ends).	
♦ 3d6 + 4 radiant damage, and the target is blinded (save ends).	
COUNTERMEASURES	
♦ Disable: Thievery DC 23. <i>Failure (18 or less):</i> The glyph is triggered. Allies can use Thievery or Arcana to aid the Thievery check, using the aid another action.	

Flame Jet A hidden nozzle lets loose with a blast of flame. The trap is triggered and rolls initiative when a character ends his or her turn in the blast area of the jet. The jet attacks on its turn every round.

Many dungeon-builders install two flame jets near each other. When one jet activates, roll initiative for both jets; each acts on its turn every round.

Flame Jet		Level 8 Trap
Object		XP 350
Detect Perception DC 24	Initiative +5	
Immune attacks		
STANDARD ACTIONS		
↔ Attack (fire) ♦ At-Will		
Attack: Close blast 3 (creatures in blast); +11 vs. Reflex		
Hit: 1d8 fire damage, and ongoing 5 fire damage (save ends).		
Miss: Half damage.		
COUNTERMEASURES		
♦ Disable: Thievery DC 24. <i>Success:</i> The jet is disabled.		

Electrified Floor Ten unremarkable tiles scattered across the floor are electrified, shocking a character who steps in the wrong place while crossing the room. Each trapped tile occupies one square. The trap attacks whenever a character enters one of its squares.

Characters can use Perception or Arcana (DC 26) to determine whether an adjacent tile is electrified, but can't otherwise distinguish trapped tiles from normal floor tiles.

Electrified Floor		Level 10 Trap
Object		XP 500
Detect Perception or Arcana DC 26	Initiative –	
Immune attacks		
TRIGGERED ACTIONS		
↓ Attack (lightning) ♦ At-Will		
<i>Trigger:</i> A creature enters an electrified square or starts its turn there.		
Attack (<i>Opportunity Action</i>): Melee 1 (triggering creature); +13 vs. Fortitude		
Hit: 2d10 + 6 lightning damage. On a critical hit, the target is stunned (save ends).		
Miss: Half damage.		
COUNTERMEASURES		
♦ Disable: Thievery DC 26. <i>Success:</i> One tile is disabled. <i>Failure (21 or less):</i> The trap attacks the creature. Allies can use Thievery or Arcana to aid the Thievery check, using the aid another action.		

Spectral Tendrils Ghostly tendrils whip from the ground to lash at characters who draw too near to a specific object—the focus of the trap, which is usually an item of unholy power or strong emotional significance that binds the spirits of the dead to remain nearby. This trap has no mechanical components to disable, but destroying the focus item disables the trap forever.

The trap covers 10 contiguous squares, and careful observation (Perception DC 20) reveals a ghostly mist hanging just above the ground in the trapped area. Understanding the nature of the trap and identifying its focus is considerably more difficult (Arcana or Religion DC 29). A character can tumble through the trapped area without triggering the trap with a successful Acrobatics check (DC 29).

Spectral Tendrils		Level 13 Trap
Object		XP 800
Detect Perception DC 20 HP 80 AC 27, Fortitude 25, Reflex 25, Will – Resist 10 all; Immune necrotic, poison, psychic, forced movement, all conditions, ongoing damage	Initiative –	
TRIGGERED ACTIONS		
↓ Attack (necrotic) ♦ At-Will		
<i>Trigger:</i> A creature enters a trapped square or starts its turn there. <i>Attack (Opportunity Action):</i> Melee 1 (triggering creature); +18 vs. AC <i>Hit:</i> 1d10 + 6 necrotic damage, and the target is dazed until the end of its next turn.		

Field of Everflame When a gate or portal to a fiery region of the Elemental Chaos remains open for many years, a small area around it can become imbued with the magic of everflame. While the place appears normal to all but the most knowledgeable observer, it's a place dangerous to creatures not accustomed to the flaming heart of the Elemental Chaos.

A field of everflame is usually 20 contiguous squares. A successful Perception check (DC 32) reveals the faintest shimmer in the air, but a successful Arcana check (DC 23) is required to identify it as everflame. When a living creature enters the area, the hazard is triggered and attacks, bursting into visible flame around the creature.

Field of Everflame		Level 18 Hazard
Terrain		XP 2,000
Detect Perception DC 32 Immune attacks	Initiative –	
TRIGGERED ACTIONS		
↓ Attack (fire) ♦ At-Will		
<i>Trigger:</i> A creature enters the hazard's area or starts its turn there. <i>Attack (Opportunity Action):</i> Melee 1 (triggering creature); +21 vs. Fortitude <i>Hit:</i> 2d10 + 5 necrotic damage, and ongoing 10 fire damage (save ends). <i>Miss:</i> Half damage.		

Entropic Collapse When a creature casts a spell or carries a magic item into an ancient, dusty room, it triggers a temporary unweaving of the strands of time. Although reality reasserts itself a few moments later, the damage to the psyches of those who have glimpsed beyond time takes longer to heal.

The dust of an entropic collapse typically covers 10 contiguous squares in a room. The swirling dust that fills the room is obvious, but a keen eye (Perception DC 36) notices the faint luminescence of the tiny dust motes. A successful Arcana check (DC 27) allows a character to notice and identify the telltale signs of an entropic collapse.

Entropic Collapse		Level 23 Hazard
Terrain		XP 5,100
Detect Perception DC 36	Initiative –	
Immune attacks		
TRIGGERED ACTIONS		
↔ Attack (psychic) ♦ At-Will		
<i>Trigger:</i> A creature carrying a magic item enters a square of the hazard's area, or a creature in the area uses an arcane power.		
<i>Attack (Opportunity Action):</i> Close burst 5 (creatures in burst); +29 vs. Will		
<i>Hit:</i> 2d6 + 6 psychic damage.		
<i>Miss:</i> Half damage.		
<i>Effect:</i> Each target is dazed (save ends).		
<i>Special:</i> Immortals, animates, and undead are immune to this hazard.		

Soul Gem This fist-sized cut crystal is often embedded in a statue or placed on a pedestal in the center of a room. When a creature steps within 5 squares of the soul gem, it starts emitting blasts of radiant power from its many facets.

Once activated, a soul gem continues to fire off its blasts each round in seemingly random directions. Lucky characters can avoid later blasts; smart ones can see them coming.

Soul Gem		Level 26 Trap
Object		XP 9,000
Detect Perception DC 22	Initiative +8	
HP 175		
AC 40, Fortitude 38, Reflex 38, Will –		
Resist 15 all; Immune necrotic, poison, psychic, forced movement, all conditions, ongoing damage		
STANDARD ACTIONS		
↔ Attack (radiant) ♦ At-Will		
<i>Attack:</i> Close blast 5 (creatures in blast); +29 vs. Fortitude		
<i>Hit:</i> The target is stunned and takes ongoing 10 radiant damage (save ends both).		
<i>Aftereffect:</i> The target is dazed and takes ongoing 5 radiant damage (save ends both).		
COUNTERMEASURES		
♦ Disable: Thievery DC 39. <i>Failure (34 or less):</i> The trap attacks in a blast that includes the creature's space.		
♦ Predict: Arcana DC 39 (minor action). <i>Success:</i> The creature can determine the area of the blast that will occur on the soul gem's next turn.		



Sphere of Annihilation A sphere of annihilation is a globe of absolute blackness, a ball of nothingness about 2 feet in diameter. It is actually a hole in the continuity of the multiverse, a void. Any matter that comes in contact with a sphere is instantly sucked into the void, gone, utterly destroyed. The sphere is basically static, resting in some spot as if it were a normal hole in a floor or wall, or sometimes hovering in the air, but a character of sufficient mental power can cause it to move.

A talisman attuned to a sphere of annihilation allows the wielder to control its movement more easily. An attuned talisman gives the wielder a +10 bonus on Intelligence checks to move the sphere. A special ritual is required to create and attune the talisman, which is a level 29 rare magic item.

Sphere of Annihilation	Level 29 Trap
Object	XP 15,000
Detect automatic	Initiative –
Immune attacks	
TRIGGERED ACTIONS	
↓ Attack ♦ At-Will	
<i>Trigger:</i> A creature enters the sphere's square or the sphere enters a creature's square.	
<i>Attack (Opportunity Action):</i> Melee 0 (one creature); +32 vs. Fortitude	
<i>Hit:</i> 6d6 + 10 damage, and ongoing 15 damage (save ends). A creature reduced to 0 hit points or fewer by this attack is destroyed, reduced to a pile of fine gray dust.	
COUNTERMEASURES	
♦ Control: Requires talisman. Intelligence DC 30 (move action). <i>Success:</i> The creature can slide the sphere one square for every 5 points of check result above 25 (30-34 = 1 square, 35-39 = 2 squares, and so on). <i>Failure:</i> The creature instead pulls the sphere 1 square.	

SKILL CHALLENGES

An audience with the duke, a mysterious set of sigils in a hidden chamber, finding a safe path through a haunted forest—all of these present challenges that test adventurers, challenges that can be represented by skill challenges.

From disabling a complex trap to negotiating peace between warring nations, skill challenges take complex activities and structure them into a series of skill checks. They should never replace the roleplaying, puzzling, and ingenuity that go into players' approaches to those situations, but they place that effort into a defined rules structure so that you can more easily adjudicate them and players can more easily understand the options available.

A skill challenge can stand on its own as a noncombat encounter. For example, a group might have an encounter in which they are trying to extract a secret from a stubborn cultist. Alternatively, a skill challenge can be integrated into a combat encounter. While fighting the cult's leader, some of the adventurers might engage in a skill challenge to disrupt the magic of a dark ritual that the cult performed.

The Basics

To deal with a typical skill challenge, a group of adventurers makes a series of skill checks, sometimes spread over a few rounds and sometimes spread over days. You let the players know when the challenge begins, or you can let it begin quietly, when an adventurer makes a skill check that you count as the first check of the challenge. As the challenge proceeds, you can prompt the players to make checks, let them choose when to make checks, or both. You can have the adventurers act in initiative order or in some other order of your choice. You can tell the players which skills to use, let them improvise which ones they use, or both.

The skill challenge is completed either when a specified number of successful skill checks is reached or when three failures are reached. If the adventurers complete the challenge through successes, they are said to have succeeded at the challenge. Otherwise, they fail the challenge. Whether the adventurers succeed or fail, they complete the challenge, face its consequences, and receive experience points.

For example, the adventurers seek a temple in the heart of a jungle—a skill challenge that might occupy them for hours. Achieving six successes means they find their way without too much trouble. Accumulating three failures before achieving the successes, however, indicates that they get lost for part of the search, fight their way through quicksand, and arrive at the temple worn out, having lost some healing surges on the way.

Components of a Skill Challenge

A typical skill challenge includes five main components, whether the challenge is an encounter in its own right or part of another encounter.

1. Goal Each skill challenge has a goal. Completing a skill challenge almost always results in achieving that goal. If the adventurers succeed at the challenge, they achieve the goal more or less unscathed. If the adventurers fail the challenge, they typically achieve the goal, but pay some price for doing so (see “Consequences” below).

Skill challenge goals take many forms: find the lost temple, escape the crumbling tower, disrupt the fiendish ritual, compete in a tournament, and so on. The best skill challenge goals can be achieved with degrees of success or failure, rather than total success or failure.

2. Level and DCs A skill challenge has a level, which helps determine the DCs of the skill checks involved. A typical skill challenge is the same level as the adventurers, although you might choose to set the level higher or lower.

Most skill checks in a typical challenge are against the moderate DC of the challenge’s level (see the Difficulty Class by Level table, page 107). However, after a character has used a particular skill to achieve a success against the moderate DC, later uses of that skill in the challenge by the same character should be against the hard DC.

Group checks work differently; they should typically use the easy DC of a challenge’s level. Also, in a high complexity challenge (complexity 3 or higher), adventurers have ways of circumventing the DC guidelines through the use of special advantages. See the sidebar “Advantages” below.

A challenge ideally includes at least four ways to gain a success against a moderate DC. Using too many hard DCs threatens to make a challenge too difficult, and using too many easy DCs (except in group checks) makes the challenge trivial.

3. Complexity The complexity of a skill challenge determines the number of successful checks the adventurers must accumulate to succeed at the challenge.

The Skill Challenge Complexity table lists the five grades of complexity. As shown in the table, a complexity 1 challenge requires four successful skill checks to be completed successfully. Each grade of complexity after the first requires two more successes.

Most challenges (complexity 2 and higher) should involve a mix of moderate and hard DCs. The table suggests a mix for each grade of complexity.

In a high complexity challenge (complexity 3 or higher), adventurers have access to a certain number of special advantages, specified in the table. See the sidebar “Advantages” for how advantages work.

ADVANTAGES

A skill challenge that has a complexity of 3 or higher is considered to have a high complexity. Such a challenge should include ways for an adventurer to gain an advantage of some kind, an edge that lets the adventurer remove a failure or gain successes more easily than normal. Without such advantages, the challenge risks becoming an unavoidable failure.

For each success beyond six required in a challenge, one of the following advantages should be available:

- ◆ A success against a hard DC counts as two successes, a success against both a hard DC and a moderate DC.
- ◆ A success against a hard DC removes a failure that has already been accumulated in the challenge, instead of counting as a success.
- ◆ A success against an easy DC counts as a success against a moderate DC.
- ◆ A character's success against a moderate DC counts as a success even though the character has already used the same skill to gain a success against a moderate DC.

You can mix and match these advantages in a challenge and can use the same one more than once. If you prefer one or two of the advantages over the others, just use the ones you like.

You either determine in advance which of these advantages are available or let the players' creative use of skills determine when an advantage comes into play. For example, a player might come up with an unusually creative use for the Endurance skill in a challenge and then hit a hard DC with the skill. You might reward the player's creativity by allowing the success to remove a failure. Similarly, you might reward an adventurer for overshooting a DC. The adventurer might make a skill check against a moderate DC but hit a hard DC. You could let that success count as two.

If a published skill challenge has a complexity of 3 or higher but does not include suggestions for granting advantages, make sure to grant an appropriate number of advantages in play. An easy rule of thumb is to count a few checks that hit a hard DC as double successes.

If a group of adventurers has members who can easily hit the moderate and the hard DCs of a challenge, then fewer of these advantages are necessary in that challenge. In other words, a group of experts needs fewer tricks for avoiding failure.

SKILL CHALLENGE COMPLEXITY

Complexity	Successes	Advantages	Typical DCs
1	4	–	4 moderate
2	6	–	5 moderate, 1 hard
3	8	2	6 moderate, 2 hard
4	10	4	7 moderate, 3 hard
5	12	6	8 moderate, 4 hard

Succeeding on a complexity 1 challenge is roughly equivalent to defeating a single monster. Adding a grade of complexity is akin to adding a monster to a combat encounter. This means a complexity 5 challenge has the same weight in an adventure as a typical combat encounter and awards a comparable amount of experience (see “Consequences” below).

A skill challenge that is part of a combat encounter typically has a complexity of 1 or 2, taking the place of one or two monsters in the encounter of the challenge's level.

4. Primary and Secondary Skills Each skill challenge has skills associated with it—the skills that adventurers can use in the challenge. Skill challenges typically include a mix of interaction skills, such as Bluff and Diplomacy; knowledge skills, such as Arcana and Nature; and physical skills, such as Athletics and Acrobatics. Such a mix rewards a group that has a variety of skill specialties.

Whatever skills you choose for a skill challenge, designate them as primary or secondary. A typical skill challenge has a number of skills equal to the number of adventurers plus two. Usually two or three of those skills are secondary, and the rest are primary.

Primary Skills: Certain skills naturally lead to the solution of the problem that a challenge presents. These skills serve as the primary skills in the challenge. You pick the primary skills before a challenge begins and tell them to the players.



Typically a primary skill can be used more than once to contribute successes to the challenge, although you might limit the number. A good maximum is equal to the complexity of the challenge.

Secondary Skills: A secondary skill is tangentially related to a skill challenge and can usually contribute only one success. When players improvise creative uses for skills that weren't on your list of skills for the challenge, you can treat the skill as secondary.

You might decide that a particular secondary skill can't contribute any successes to a challenge, but instead provides some other benefit as a result of a successful check: a bonus to a check with a primary skill, a reroll of a different skill check, the addition of a skill to the list of primary skills, and so on.

5. Consequences Whether adventurers succeed or fail at a skill challenge, there are consequences, and the adventure goes on.

Success: When adventurers succeed on a skill challenge, they earn rewards specific to the challenge, which might boil down to the adventure simply continuing smoothly. They could also gain treasures, bonuses or advantages in future encounters, or information useful later in the campaign.

Failure: Failing a challenge doesn't bring the adventure to a halt. Instead there is a price to pay. Penalties for failure might include the loss of healing surges or some other lingering penalty, making a later encounter more difficult.

Experience Points: Whether the adventurers succeed or fail, they receive experience points for completing a skill challenge. The rule of thumb is that the adventurers gain experience points as if they had defeated a number of monsters equal to the challenge's complexity and as if the monsters were of the challenge's level. For example, if the adventurers complete a 7th-level challenge that has a complexity of 1, they receive 300 XP (the award for a single 7th-level monster). If they complete a 7th-level challenge with a complexity of 5, they receive 1,500 XP (the award for five such monsters).

Stages of Success In some skill challenges, each success moves the adventurers partway toward their goal, so that even if they fail, they still have some of what they need. This method works well, for example, in a challenge whose goal is to extract information from a hostile or wary nonplayer character: With each success, the characters get some tidbits of information. The most valuable information comes last (when they achieve the target number of successes for the complexity of the challenge), but even one success followed by three failures gives the adventurers some tidbits they can use to keep the adventure moving.

Perhaps the adventurers undertake a skill challenge to weaken a vampire lord before they finally face him in combat. Each success (or every three successes) removes some protective ward or special defense the vampire lord possesses,

so even if the characters fail the challenge—and are thrust into combat with the vampire—they have still weakened him a little, and the fight is measurably easier than if they had achieved no successes at all.

Stages of Failure One way that some skill challenges remain lively is by providing immediate consequences for each failed check in the challenge. Each time the characters fail, the consequences become gradually worse, climaxing in the termination of the skill challenge after three failures.

Here are some typical consequences that can occur in response to a failure:

- ◆ The character who failed the check loses a healing surge or (in a combat encounter) takes damage.
- ◆ The characters must spend time or money making up for the failure.
- ◆ For the rest of the challenge, no character can achieve a success using the same skill that was used for the failed check.
- ◆ If the challenge takes place in a combat encounter, the character who failed the check is dazed or even stunned until the end of his or her next turn. Or an enemy is angered and gains a +2 bonus to its next attack roll.
- ◆ The next check using a specified skill takes a penalty. For example, if a character fails an Intimidate check in the midst of a complex negotiation, the next character who attempts a Diplomacy check takes a -2 penalty.

Example of Play

This example shows a DM running a skill challenge for five adventurers: Valenae (an eladrin warpriest), Dendric (a human knight), Uldane (a halfling thief), Kathra (a dwarf mage), and Shara (a human slayer). After a battle with a demonic creature that attempted to slay their friend, the priest Pendergraf, the adventurers must determine where the monster came from to prevent another attack.

This 1st-level challenge has a complexity of 1 and requires four successes against DC 12, the moderate DC for 1st level. The goal of the challenge is to find the spot where the party's enemy, a wizard named Garan, summoned the demon. Garan has hired some thugs to attack the adventurers if they spot them snooping around. If the adventurers fail the challenge, the thugs find them and attack.

DM: You're left with the last misty remnants of the strange creature's corpse and a handful of frightened witnesses. "What was that thing?" Pendergraf asks. "And where did it come from?"

Kathra: Can I make an Arcana check to see if I know anything about it?

DM: Sure.

Kathra: I got a 14.

DM (marking down a success for the characters): OK, you know that the creature was some sort of demon, not native to the world. The demon was probably summoned here.

Uldane: Can I look around and see if I can tell which way it came from?

DM: Sure, make a Perception check.

Uldane: Ouch, a 9. Someone remind me to open my eyes the next time I try looking around.

DM (marking the first failure): It takes you quite a bit of work to uncover the tracks. It looks like they head to the east side of town.

Valenae: Let's follow the tracks. If we want to protect Pendergraf and the other priests of Pelor, we need to find and destroy whoever summoned that thing.

DM: The tracks continue for a block or two before they twist and turn around. You realize that you confused the monster's tracks with a horse's, double back, and finally find the trail. It leads to the river quarter, the roughest part of town. The trail ends outside a rundown tavern. Three thuggish-looking men sit on a bench by the front door. They glare at you as you approach.

Notice how the failed check didn't stop the action. The adventurers wasted some time, giving the thugs more time to find them, but the adventurers eventually found the trail.

Kathra: I'd like to talk to the men to see if any of them saw the demon come by here. How about a Diplomacy check—an 11.

DM (marking the second failure): The thugs make a show of ignoring you as you approach. Then one of them snarls: "Around here, folks know better than to stick their noses where they're not wanted." He puts a hand on the hilt of his dagger.

Shara: I put a hand on my greatsword and growl back at them, "I'll stick my sword where it's not wanted if you keep up that attitude." I got a 21 on my Intimide check.

DM (marking the second success): The thug turns pale in fear as his friends bolt back into the tavern. He points at the building behind you before darting after them.

Dendric: What's the place look like? Is it a shop or a private residence?

DM: Someone make a Streetwise check.

Uldane: Using aid another, I try to assist Dendric, since he has the highest Streetwise. I got a 12, so Dendric gets a +2 bonus.

Dendric: Thanks, Uldane. Here's my check . . . great, a natural 1. That's a 10, even with Uldane's assistance.

DM (marking the third and final failure): It looks like an old shop that's been closed and boarded up. You heard something about this place before, but you can't quite remember it. As you look the place over, the tavern door opens up behind you. A hulk of a half-orc lumbers out, followed by the thugs you talked to earlier. "I heard you thought you could push my crew around. Well, let's see you talk tough through a set of broken teeth." Roll for initiative!

Unfortunately for the adventurers, they failed the skill challenge. If they had succeeded on the last check, they would have remembered stories of a secret entrance into the building and had a chance to find the hidden lab where Garan summoned the demon. They can question the half-orc and learn something about their foe, but not as much they would have learned from finding the lab. Perhaps they can still find the lab, but the delay caused by the fight gives Garan a head start in escaping.

RUNNING A CAMPAIGN

Running a campaign boils down to running a series of adventures. The secret of a good campaign lies in how you weave adventures together to form a larger story, including the little things that give the sense of a coherent, consistent world.

Linking Adventures

Adventures that relate directly to your campaign's story trace its development over the characters' careers. A dungeon-of-the-week sort of campaign doesn't necessarily need any link between one adventure and the next, and even one with a tight theme can include occasional adventures that are completely unconnected to other events. But a campaign story that connects the adventures lets the players feel as though they're making real progress, not just racking up experience points.

A simple way to tie adventures together is to use common foes, related quests, and linked events that are related to the campaign's overall story. Each suite of adventures might contain enough encounters to advance the characters three or four levels, serving as a simple story arc. You need no more than that to take characters from 1st level all the way to 30th. The adventurers might spend most of their careers fighting the Nine Dread Scions, working their way through the nine dungeons where those villains reside, and then pursuing an epic quest to destroy their monstrous progenitor. Or they have to collect the pieces of the *Rod of Seven Parts* scattered in ruins across the world before confronting the primordial Queen of Chaos.

Story Hooks You can make a campaign feel like one story with many chapters by planting the seeds of the next adventure before the last one is finished. This technique naturally and smoothly moves the characters along. You don't have to do this all the time—it's all right for the party to have some downtime. But when you take the opportunity to introduce the right elements, you can hook the players and the characters effectively.

If you've set the hook properly, when the characters finish the current adventure, they'll naturally follow up on that "loose end." Perhaps an adventurer drinks from a magic fountain in a dungeon and receives a mystifying vision that foreshadows the next episode. The party might find a cryptic map or bizarre relic that, once its meaning is puzzled out, points to the next quest. Perhaps an NPC warns the characters of impending danger or implores them for help.

Be careful, though, that you don't distract the characters from the adventure at hand. Designing an effective hook takes some experimentation. It should be compelling, but not so much that the characters stop caring about what they're doing right now. It should encourage them to finish the current adventure, preferably by requiring them to complete a related task. That way, they get interested early on, but they can't start the next adventure until they've successfully completed this one. They might have to assemble all the pieces of a map in a

dungeon to learn where it leads. Alternatively, they find the map but can't decode it without the key, which they recover from the defeated villain.

The best way to keep players from straying is to save your hooks for the very end of your adventures. The villain wields a bizarre relic that leads the characters to learn more about its history, or the party discovers a letter demonstrating that the villain is working for someone else.

History and Foreshadowing

You can make good use of the history behind your campaign by relating it to the unfolding story. Uncovering that history is a natural way to link adventures. For example, the ultimate villain might be some enormously powerful aberrant being that was imprisoned deep in the earth ages ago. Over the course of their adventures, the characters fight large numbers of aberrant creatures, slowly learning about this alien being. These hints foreshadow the climax of your unfolding story—the aberrant horror breaking free of its prison. Examples of such historical elements include the ruins of ancient temples devoted to the being, records of the destruction it caused during its rampages, information about the magic used to bind and imprison it, and hints to the location of its prison.

Foreshadowing doesn't need to have anything to do with history, though. If the party fights a lot of demons and undead over the course of adventures, your players will have a good idea that the campaign will end in a confrontation with Orcus. You can also use prophetic verses to hint at future events. Watch out for being heavy-handed or, conversely, too obscure. A well-designed prophecy is a kind of riddle that helps the characters recognize and deal with key events when they occur.

Keeping Track

Details matter. Your players will more easily imagine that their characters are living in a real world if it makes sense. If the adventurers frequent a particular tavern, the layout of the building, the staff, and even the decor shouldn't change dramatically from one visit to the next. Consistent details bring the world to life.

On the other hand, the world should definitely respond to the characters' actions. When the adventurers kill a monster, it stays dead; when they remove treasure from a room, it doesn't magically reappear the next time they enter. If they leave a door open, it should stay open—unless someone closes it. If you're meticulous about details, the players pay attention when things aren't as they expect.

No one's memory is infallible, so it pays to keep track of such details. A simple method is jotting notes directly on your adventure map to keep track of open doors, disarmed traps, and the like. Events beyond the scope of a single adventure are best recorded in a notebook dedicated to your campaign. Whether it's a literal book or some kind of electronic file, such a record is a great way to keep your notes organized.

Your notebook might contain any of the following entries.

- ◆ **Campaign Journal:** This is the place for notes about your campaign theme and story, including the plot outline for planning future adventures. Update that outline as the campaign develops, adding ideas as they come to you.
- ◆ **Adventure Log:** This briefly summarizes each adventure to help you keep track of the unfolding campaign story. You can give your players access to this log as well, or to an edited version stripped of your notes and secrets. The players might instead keep their own record of adventures, which you should also read and copy to your notebook.
- ◆ **NPC Notes:** Record statistics and roleplaying notes for any nonplayer character the adventurers might interact with more than once. Here's where to identify the two bartenders with their different voices, as well as their names, the tavern where they work, the names of other staff members—maybe even what's on the menu. Keep notes on when and how the adventurers meet your NPCs, and keep track of the status of their relationships.
- ◆ **Character Notes:** Keep a running tally of the characters' classes and levels, their goals and backgrounds, any individual quests they're pursuing, the magic items they want, and any other details that might be significant to your planning. You might even maintain a copy of each character sheet, particularly if they're in electronic form. It's also a good idea to make notes about the players—their motivations and play styles, what kinds of encounters they particularly enjoy, and what pizza toppings they prefer.
- ◆ **Campaign Calendar:** Your world feels more real to your players when the characters notice the passage of time. Here's where you note details such as the change of seasons and major holidays, and keep track of any important events that affect the larger story.

CAMPAIGN THEME

Just as the personality of a setting shapes the adventures that take place there, the theme of a campaign gives a distinctive flavor to its stories. A freewheeling series of adventures, in which the characters travel from one dungeon to another with little or no connection, feels very different from a years-long struggle against cultists of Orcus that culminates in a final showdown with the Demon Lord of the Undead himself.

You don't have to stick with a single theme from the start of your campaign through thirty levels of play. The characters grow and change over the course of a campaign; so should your world. You can wrap up one storyline after a few levels and start a new one, or introduce multiple themes at various levels and weave them subtly together. Breaks between tiers are natural points for concluding one theme and bringing in another.

Dungeon of the Week

This sort of campaign resembles an episodic television show. Each week, the adventurers move from one distinct setting to another (a planet, a haunted house, an era of history, and so on). They solve that episode's problems, then go on their way to deal with the next. Once they're done, things return to pretty much the way they were at the start.

A "Dungeon of the Week" is the simplest kind of campaign to run, since it requires little effort beyond finding or creating adventures. Each story has its own main villain, unconnected to the antagonists of any other. The DUNGEONS & DRAGONS game world is dark and full of threats, and they don't need anything else in common.

On a Mission

Only slightly more involved than an unconnected series of adventures, this campaign theme quickly links the characters' exploits with an overarching goal. It's easy to overlay a mission or similar story on otherwise independent sessions. The simplest is one of exploration: The adventurers set out to map the region, the continent, or the whole world, encountering threats along the way. Perhaps they seek the ancient capital of a fallen empire, or are trying to find their way back to the home they left to fight in a recent war.

Religion is a ready-made source of missions. For example, the adventurers could be pilgrims to some holy site, or members of a sacred order dedicated to defending the last bastions of civilization in an ever-darkening world. In more militant orders, they might be holy warriors dedicated to stamping out a particular kind of threat, such as aberrant creatures or demonic cultists. Whatever the story, it implies a stronger connection between adventures.

Ultimate Villain

Episodic adventures against a certain kind of opponent, such as in the “holy warrior” mission above, lead naturally to a campaign focused on a single villain who’s ultimately behind everything. The adventurers might begin their careers fighting goblins and kobolds, only to discover that those monsters are the servants of horrid aberrant monsters called foulspawn. Their continuing adventures lead them into the horrors of the Far Realm’s influence, with battles against beholders and illithids, climaxing in an epic struggle against a mind flayer mastermind and its enthralled minions. That aberrant mastermind need not have been directly involved in the characters’ first adventures, but the existence of even the lowly foulspawn can be traced to its activities.

You can build a villain-focused campaign from the top down or from the bottom up. In the first method, you first choose an epic villain for the campaign’s climactic battle (Orcus, for example), and then plan adventures toward that conclusion from the start of the campaign. In the case of Orcus, these encounters build on themes of cultists, demons, and undead. In the second method, you build encounters around low-level monsters that appeal to you (such as the foulspawn) and then create adventures involving similar or related monsters at higher levels.

World-Shaking Events

A campaign featuring a major villain often revolves around a diabolical plan that will result in significant changes to the world—presumably for the worse—which the adventurers must stop. In other campaigns, the world faces a crisis without a villain’s involvement, and the characters have to prevent or at least minimize the impact of such an event.

Campaigns of this nature have a deadline that looms over the course of dozens of adventures. The dreaded event will take place at a certain time unless the characters succeed. Perhaps the Elemental Chaos is eating away at the stable fabric of





creation, drawing the world toward ultimate entropy; the adventurers must collect scattered shards of divine energy to shore up the pillars of creation. Or a primordial entombed at the center of the earth is extending tendrils of reality-warping energy toward the surface, forming dungeons that spew forth hideous monstrosities. The characters must clear the dungeons and cut off their connection to the primordial before they engulf what shattered remnants of civilization remain. The threat to your world might be mundane in nature, but no less devastating—in the last days of a great empire’s decline, orc hordes menace the frontiers while decadence and corruption undermine the empire’s foundation.

Unfolding Prophecy

This type of campaign puts an interesting spin on world-shaking events, casting them as the unfolding fulfillment of an ancient prophecy. A villain might be helping to bring about the foretold doom, furthering his own plans, or try to keep the prophecy from coming true (for example, killing the child who is destined to destroy the villain).

The beauty of a well-crafted prophecy is its ambiguity. Classical myth is full of examples of tragic misinterpretation or ultimate vindication of what has been foretold. Since it’s always open to a variety of interpretations, many different ways can exist to fulfill the prophecy. The villain might try to bring it about in one way, while the characters struggle to find a solution that betters the world instead of plunging it into ruin.

Divine Strife

The ongoing struggle between good and evil is the basis for many tales, myths, and campaigns. In a conflict between two gods, or between groups of deities with different alignments, taking sides becomes a matter of cosmic importance.

In a campaign built around divine strife, the adventurers aren't just fighting evil creatures—they're servants of good deities warring with the agents of evil ones. They might be champions of a single god, such as Bahamut, dedicated to overthrowing the temples of Bane. In such a storyline, the enemies of their adventures are connected to the opposing deity: priests of Bane, hobgoblin warlords devoted to that lord of conquest, and angelic servitors of the god himself.

Primordial Threat

Even more fundamental to the world than conflicts among deities is the gods' ancient war with the primordials, embodiments of chaos and elemental power. From the earliest times, gods and primordials fought over ownership of the cosmos, and the gods emerged victorious. The surviving primordials could yet arise as a threat to the whole of creation, seeking to return it to the Elemental Chaos of its birth.

In the early stages of such a campaign, the adventurers might battle a goblin cult of a minor fire spirit, then discover that it is just one manifestation of a worldwide madness. More cults dedicated to destructive elemental forces are springing up everywhere, channeling power to the entombed primordials in preparation for their escape. Ultimately, the epic-level characters might have to fight alongside the gods themselves to oppose these mighty foes.

The Campaign Outline

Once you have some idea of how your campaign theme will shape the story and have developed a historical backdrop, you can sketch out its major events. Such an outline must be in broad strokes, since the characters' actions have to make a difference, and their choices be meaningful. This sketch is likely to change significantly as your campaign progresses and new details are filled in. If nothing else, though, you'll at least have an idea of the campaign's climax and how the characters can get there. When they stray from your outline—and they will—you'll have some sense of what adventures to create to get them back on course.

One way to think about this outline is to divide it into adventuring tiers: heroic, paragon, and epic. You can use the *Monster Vault* to find out the kinds of threats the characters might face at each tier. Since characters need eight to ten encounters to gain a level, a tier consists of roughly a hundred encounters, or ten fairly short adventures. There are plenty of drow in the paragon tier, for example—perhaps at those levels the characters will be traveling through the Underdark realms. You can use that idea as a springboard for designing adventures to fit your broad story outline from 11th to 20th level.



REWARDS

Experience points, treasure, action points, and intangible rewards keep characters moving on from encounter to encounter, level to level, and adventure to adventure. Small rewards come frequently, while large rewards provide a big boost once in a while. Both are important.

Without frequent small rewards, players begin to feel like their efforts aren't paying off. They're doing a lot of work with nothing to show for it. Without occasional large rewards, encounters feel like pushing a button to get a morsel of food—a repetitive grind with no meaningful variation.

Fortune and glory! . . .

Oh, and don't forget to loot the bodies.

Characters gain experience points (XP) for every encounter they complete. They gain action points when they reach milestones, generally after every two encounters. They gain treasure as they complete encounters—not after every encounter, but sporadically over the course of an adventure. They gain a level after completing eight to ten encounters (including quests).

EXPERIENCE POINTS

Experience points are a measure of a character's learning and growth. When adventurers complete an encounter or a quest, you awards them experience points (XP). The amount of XP depends on the difficulty of the encounter or the quest. Completing a major quest is comparable to completing an encounter, while minor quests bring smaller rewards.

A 1st-level character starts with 0 XP. Characters accumulate XP from each encounter, quest, and adventure, always adding to their XP total. They never lose XP, and their total never resets to 0.

As characters accumulate XP, they gain levels. The amount of XP characters need for each level varies. For example, they need 1,000 XP to reach 2nd level but 2,250 to reach 3rd. When they gain 1,000,000 XP, they reach 30th level, the pinnacle of accomplishment. *Heroes of the Fallen Lands*, *Heroes of the Forgotten Kingdoms*, and the *Rules Compendium* tell players how many XP they need to advance levels and what benefits they gain as they advance.

XP Rewards

Characters earn XP for every encounter they overcome. The XP reward for completing an encounter is the sum of the XP values for each monster, NPC, trap, or hazard that makes up the encounter. You noted or assigned this number when you built the encounter, to judge its difficulty against your players. (Published adventures note the XP value of each encounter they contain.) Divide the XP total for the encounter by the number of players present to help overcome it, and that's how many XP each character gets.

Overcoming an Encounter: What counts as overcoming an encounter? Killing, routing, or capturing the opponents in a combat encounter certainly counts. Completing a skill challenge is overcoming it. Remember that an encounter, by definition, has a risk of failure. If that risk isn't present, it's not an encounter, and the characters don't earn XP. If the adventurers accidentally trigger a trap as they make their way down a hallway, they don't get XP because it wasn't an encounter. If the trap constitutes an encounter or is part of an encounter, though, they do earn XP if they manage to disarm or destroy it.

Say the adventurers avoid a hydra to get into the treasure vault it guards. Do they get XP for overcoming the challenge of the hydra? No. If the treasure was the object of a quest, they get the reward for completing the quest (see "Quests," page 173), which should include XP as well as treasure. But because they didn't have an encounter with the hydra, they didn't overcome the challenge. (If they sneak past, trick, or defeat the hydra in an encounter, they do earn XP.)

XP for Combat Encounters: The *Monster Vault* indicates the XP reward each monster is worth. That number comes from the Experience Point Rewards table on this page, and it depends on the monster's level. A minion is worth one-quarter of the XP of a standard monster of its level. An elite monster is worth twice as much XP, and a solo monster is worth five times as much XP.

XP for Noncombat Encounters: Noncombat encounters that carry risk also carry reward. A skill challenge has a level and a difficulty that combine to determine the XP your characters earn for completing the challenge. A skill challenge counts as a number of threats of its level equal to its complexity—so a 7th-level challenge with a complexity of 3 counts as three 7th-level threats, or 900 XP.

EXPERIENCE POINT REWARDS

Threat Level	XP Value	Threat Level	XP Value	Threat Level	XP Value
1	100	11	600	21	3,200
2	125	12	700	22	4,150
3	150	13	800	23	5,100
4	175	14	1,000	24	6,050
5	200	15	1,200	25	7,000
6	250	16	1,400	26	9,000
7	300	17	1,600	27	11,000
8	350	18	2,000	28	13,000
9	400	19	2,400	29	15,000
10	500	20	2,800	30	19,000

QUESTS

Completing quests earns rewards for the adventurers. These rewards primarily take the form of treasure (both money and items) and experience points, but quests can also have less concrete rewards. Perhaps someone owes them a favor, they've earned the respect of an organization that might give them future quests, or they've established a contact who can provide them with important information or access.

A minor quest is worth the the XP value shown on the Experience Point Rewards table for its level. Completing a major quest is equivalent to completing an encounter, so it really feels like a significant accomplishment. A major quest is worth that value times the number of characters in the party, the same as a whole encounter of its level. As with other rewards, all the adventurers share in the rewards for quests, even if the quest was meant for an individual member of the group.

Even though the XP reward for a major quest is the same as the reward for an encounter, don't count a quest as an encounter for the purposes of earning action points. Characters need to complete two actual encounters to gain an action point.

If you want to, you can attach a treasure reward to a quest as well as XP. Treat a quest just like an encounter for purposes of treasure. You can assign one or more treasures to its completion, or you can put all the treasure in the dungeon. Sometimes the person who gave the adventurers a quest gives them a payment for completing it. Sometimes the characters collect a bounty on the head of a dangerous criminal or receive a goodwill offering collected by the families and friends of the prisoners they rescued and escorted back to safety.

MILESTONES

Characters gain certain benefits when they reach a milestone—when they complete two encounters without stopping for an extended rest. For every two encounters the characters complete between extended rests, they reach a milestone.

Action Points

When characters reach milestones, they get action points. Action points help balance the depletion of character resources (expended daily powers and healing surges) by providing a new resource that can help characters adventure longer before taking an extended rest.

Characters have 1 action point when they complete an extended rest. When they reach a milestone, they gain another action point. They gain additional action points after every milestone. When they take an extended rest, they lose any unspent action points and start the next day with 1 action point again.

Varying Milestone Rewards

You're well within your rights to tell the players that an encounter doesn't count toward a milestone. An encounter that's two or more levels lower than the characters is really easy, and it shouldn't contribute toward a milestone.

Likewise, if the characters overcome an encounter that's really hard, you can count it as two encounters, so they reach a milestone right away. An encounter that's four or more levels higher than the characters should count as two encounters.

If you vary encounter difficulty within a more normal range—one level below to two or three levels above the characters' level—just count each encounter as one. The harder encounters balance out the easier ones.



TREASURE

Treasure rewards come in two basic flavors: magic items and monetary treasure. Magic items include all the magic weapons, armor, gear, and wondrous items detailed in *Heroes of the Fallen Lands*, *Heroes of the Forgotten Kingdoms*, and other sources. Monetary treasure includes coins (silver, gold, and platinum), precious gems, and valuable objects of art. Over the course of an adventure, characters acquire treasure of all kinds.

Monetary Treasure

Monetary treasure doesn't have a level, but it has a similar economy. Gold coins are the standard coins of treasure hoards from 1st level through the paragon tier. At the lowest levels, adventurers might find silver coins as well, but that mundane coinage disappears from hoards after about 5th level.

In the mid-paragon tier, platinum coins start appearing in treasures. One platinum piece (pp) is worth 100 gp and weighs the same as 1 gold piece, so it's a much easier way to transport the quantities of wealth that high-level characters possess. By the time adventurers reach epic level, they rarely see gold any more. Platinum is the new standard.

In the mid-epic tier, a new currency comes into play: astral diamonds. These precious gems are used as currency in the Elemental Chaos and in any divine dominions that have commercial economies. One astral diamond (ad) is worth 100 pp or 10,000 gp, and 10 ad weigh as much as one gold or platinum coin—so 500 ad weigh one pound. Astral diamonds never completely replace platinum, but they're a useful measure of wealth in the high epic tier. Astral diamonds are most commonly found in strings of five or ten, linked together in settings of mithral or silver.

Gems

Precious gems are as good as currency. Characters can cash them out at full value or use them to purchase expensive items. Gemstones come in four common values: 100 gp, 500 gp, 1,000 gp, and 5,000 gp. The most common examples of each value are shown on the lists below. (Numerous kinds of gems exist.) Astral diamonds are technically gemstones worth 10,000 gp apiece, but they are more often used as currency in their own right.

Gems appear in treasures beginning at 1st level. In the paragon tier, 100 gp gems are rare. Gems worth 500 gp start

Gemstones

100 gp Gems: amber, amethyst, garnet, moonstone, jade, pearl, peridot, turquoise

500 gp Gems: alexandrite, aquamarine, black pearl, topaz

1,000 gp Gems: emerald, fire opal, sapphire

5,000 gp Gems: diamond, jacinth, ruby

appearing in 5th-level treasures and fade out in the paragon tier. Gems worth 1,000 gp appear from the middle of the heroic tier to the high end of the paragon tier. The most precious gems occur only in paragon and epic treasures.

Art Objects

Art objects include idols of solid gold, necklaces dripping with gems, old paintings of ancient monarchs, bejeweled golden chalices, and more. Art objects found as treasure are at least reasonably portable, as opposed to enormous statues (even if they are made of solid platinum) or tapestries woven with gold thread.

In the heroic tier, adventurers commonly find art objects worth 250 gp or 1,500 gp. At paragon levels, items worth 2,500 gp or 7,500 gp appear. At high paragon and epic levels, items worth 15,000 gp and 50,000 gp appear in treasures as well. Examples of each category of item appear on the lists below.

Many of the most precious art objects include material from the Elemental Chaos or the Astral Sea and its dominions. None have any magical effect, however, and even elemental fire is stripped of its heat in the crafting process so it can't do any damage (to its wearer or an enemy).

Art Objects

250 gp Art Objects: gold ring with 100 gp gem, bone or ivory statuette, gold bracelet, silver necklace, bronze crown, silver-plated sword, silk robe

1,500 gp Art Objects: gold ring with 1,000 gp gem, gold or silver statuette, gold bracelet with 500 gp gems, gold necklace with 100 gp gems, silver tiara or crown with 100 gp gems, ivory comb with 500 gp gems, cloth of gold vestments

2,500 gp Art Objects: gold or platinum ring with 1,000 gp gems, gold or silver statuette with 500 gp gems, gold necklace with 500 gp gems, gold crown with 500 gp gems, gold chalice with 100 gp gems, ceremonial gold breastplate

7,500 gp Art Objects: platinum ring with 5,000 gp gem, gold statuette with 1,000 gp gems, mithral necklace with 1,000 gp gems, adamantine crown with 1,000 gp gems, adamantine box containing elemental flame, black tunic woven of pure shadow

15,000 gp Art Objects: mithral ring with an astral diamond, gold statuette with 5,000 gp gems, gold necklace with 5,000 gp gems, mithral tiara with 5,000 gp gems, cup of celestial gold that glows with a soft inner light, silvery cloak of astral thread, enormous emerald or sapphire

50,000 gp Art Objects: bracelet formed of cold elemental lightning, gown woven of elemental water, brass ring with bound elemental fire, celestial gold statuette with astral diamonds, royal attire of astral thread with 5,000 gp gems, enormous diamond or ruby

Magic Items

As adventurers gain levels, the mundane equipment they use at the start of their careers is quickly overshadowed by the magic items they acquire on their adventures. Magic armor that can cloak them in shadow, magic weapons that burst into flame, magic rings that turn them invisible, or *Ioun stones* that orbit their heads to grant them great capabilities—these items enhance and supplement the powers they gain from their classes and enhance their attacks and defenses.

Two aspects of a magic item control when it is likely to become available to adventurers: its level and its rarity.

Level A magic item's level is a general measure of its power and translates to the average level of character using that item. An item's level doesn't limit who can acquire or use the item, though it's unusual for an adventurer to find magic items more than a few levels above his or her own level.

Rarity A magic item's rarity indicates how easy it is to obtain in the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS world.

Common magic items are the sort that the most advanced dwarf smiths and elf weavers create in their workshops. These items are generally simple, often having only a single special property. This might take the form of a bonus to certain skill checks or attacks, enhanced effects on a critical hit, and so on.

Adventurers can purchase these common items just as they can buy mundane equipment, though it's rare to find a shop or bazaar that routinely sells them. Some fantastic places, such as the legendary City of Brass in the heart of the Elemental Chaos, have such markets, but those are the exception rather than the rule. Rather, characters must seek out the artisans who create common magic items, but they are not especially difficult to find. In most situations—particularly with a little free time—characters can buy any common magic item they can afford without the shopping trip becoming an adventure in its own right.

Uncommon and **rare** magic items are not normally created in the current age of the world. These items were created in the distant past, some even during the Dawn War, but the techniques for crafting them have been lost to the ravages of time. Now these items are found only as part of treasure hoards in ancient ruins and dangerous dungeons. Uncommon items are more complicated and potent than common items, though they usually carry only a single property or power. Rare magic items are even more complex and wondrous, frequently having multiple properties or powers and often helping to define a character's identity.

On average, about half of the items that characters find as treasure are common items. The other half are uncommon magic items. About one magic item in eight is rare, so these items show up only about once every other level the adventurers gain. On average, that means that any given character will acquire one rare item per tier of play, and will rarely own more than three.

If the adventurers find a magic item they don't want to keep, or they find an item that replaces an item they already have, they might end up trying to sell the item. This usually isn't a favorable transaction for the adventurers—the sale price of a common magic item is only one-fifth the normal price of the item while uncommon magic items sell for one-half the normal price. Only rare magic items fetch their full normal price when sold by adventurers.

Awarding Treasure

While experience points are fundamentally an encounter-based (or quest) reward, treasure is a larger-scale reward doled out over the course of an adventure. Adventurers typically find some treasure when they complete encounters (collecting the hoard of the dragon they've slain, for example), find other treasure in secret rooms or trapped vaults, and acquire still more as rewards for completing quests. Over the course of the eight to ten encounters it takes characters to advance from one level to the next, they should acquire about ten treasures. The dragon's hoard might consist of three treasures while other encounters offer no treasure reward.

A single treasure consists of a set of die rolls on the Treasure by Party Level table. Roll a d20 once for each line of the table for the party's level (not the level of the encounter). Typically, you'll roll once for coins, once for gems, once for art objects, and once for magic items. If the d20 roll falls within the range shown on the table, the hoard includes that kind of treasure.

For example, the treasure table for 6th-level characters looks like this:

6	(11+) 8d8 x 10 gp
	(14-19) 1d4 gems worth 100 gp; (20+) one gem worth 500 gp
	(18+) 1d3 art objects worth 250 gp
	(13+) one magic item of level 1d4 + 6

To generate a treasure for five 6th-level characters, roll a d20 four times. If your first roll is 11 or better, the treasure includes gold, so roll 8d8 and multiply the result by 10 to determine how many gold pieces are in the treasure. If your second roll is 14 or better, the treasure includes gems; if it's a 20, it's a particularly valuable gem. If your third roll is 18 or better, the treasure includes art objects. And if your last roll is 13 or better, the treasure includes a magic item.

Group Size: If your group has more or less than five characters, apply a modifier to your rolls on the table. The modifier is +2 for each character above five, or -2 for each character below five. If you roll a natural 20 for a treasure, you always get the best result, unless the modified result would not normally indicate any treasure of a given type. In that case, the treasure includes the lesser result.

For example, if you're generating treasure for a party of three 6th-level characters, you use the lines of the table presented on the previous page with a -4 modifier. If you roll a natural 20 for art objects, the treasure includes 1d3 art objects worth 250 gp each, even though the adjusted roll of 16 would normally be insufficient to generate any art objects. If you roll a natural 20 for gems, the treasure includes one gem worth 500 gp, even though the adjusted roll of 16 would normally indicate gems of lesser value.

Magic Items: Special rules apply to the roll for magic items as part of a treasure. If the number on the die (before any adjustments for group size) is odd, the item is a common item. If the number on the die is even, but not a natural 20, the item is an uncommon item. If you roll a natural 20, the item is rare. Group size doesn't affect the likelihood of finding common or rare items.

The trickiest part of awarding treasure is determining what magic items to give out. Tailor these items to your party of characters. Remember that these are supposed to be items that excite the characters, items they want to use rather than sell. If none of the characters in your 6th-level party uses a longbow, don't put a 10th-level longbow in your dungeon as treasure.

One way to make sure you give players magic items they'll be excited about is to ask them for wish lists. At the start of each level, have each player write down a list of three to five uncommon items that they are intrigued by that are no more than four levels above their own level. You can choose treasure from those lists (making sure to place an item from a different character's list each time), crossing the items off as the characters find them.

Don't use wish lists for rare items. These items are completely in your purview, and should advance the story of your campaign and provide unexpected delights to the players.

Combining Treasures: Remember that you can combine treasures to make some larger hoards. Try to find a balance between the excitement of finding a large treasure hoard and the regular reward of finding several smaller treasures. As a quick rule of thumb, over the course of eight to ten encounters, use one hoard of three treasures, two hoards of two treasures each, and three rewards with a single treasure. That leaves two to four encounters with no treasure reward.

TREASURE BY PARTY LEVEL (HEROIC TIER)

Party Level	Treasure
1	(11-14) 2d6 × 100 sp; (15+) 2d6 × 10 gp (18+) 1d2 gems worth 100 gp (20+) one art object worth 250 gp (13+) one magic item of level 1d4 + 1
2	(11-13) 3d6 × 100 sp; (14+) 3d6 × 10 gp (18+) 1d3 gems worth 100 gp (19+) one art object worth 250 gp (13+) one magic item of level 1d4 + 2
3	(11-12) 3d8 × 100 sp; (13+) 3d8 × 10 gp (17+) 1d3 gems worth 100 gp (19+) one art object worth 250 gp (13+) one magic item of level 1d4 + 3
4	(11) 5d6 × 100 sp; (12+) 5d6 × 10 gp (16+) 1d3 gems worth 100 gp (19+) 1d2 art objects worth 250 gp (13+) one magic item of level 1d4 + 4
5	(11+) 4d8 × 10 gp (16+) 1d4 gems worth 100 gp (19+) 1d3 art objects worth 250 gp (13+) one magic item of level 1d4 + 5
6	(11+) 8d8 × 10 gp (14-19) 1d4 gems worth 100 gp ; (20+) one gem worth 500 gp (18+) 1d3 art objects worth 250 gp (13+) one magic item of level 1d4 + 6
7	(11+) 2d4 × 100 gp (14-19) one gem worth 500 gp; (20+) one gem worth 1,000 gp (18+) 1d3 art objects worth 250 gp (13+) one magic item of level 1d4 + 7
8	(11+) 2d6 × 100 gp (13-19) one gem worth 500 gp; (20+) one gem worth 1,000 gp (18-19) 1d3 art objects worth 250 gp; (20+) one art object worth 1,500 gp (13+) one magic item of level 1d4 + 8
9	(11+) 2d8 × 100 gp (13-19) one gem worth 500 gp; (20+) one gem worth 1,000 gp (18-19) 1d4 art objects worth 250 gp; (20+) one art object worth 1,500 gp (13+) one magic item of level 1d4 + 9
10	(11+) 2d10 × 100 gp (13-19) one gem worth 500 gp; (20+) one gem worth 1,000 gp (18-19) one art object worth 1,500 gp; (20+) one art object worth 2,500 gp (13+) one magic item of level 1d4 + 10

TREASURE BY PARTY LEVEL (PARAGON TIER)

Party Level	Treasure
11	(11+) 4d8 × 100 gp (13-19) one gem worth 1,000 gp; (20+) one gem worth 5,000 gp (18-19) one art object worth 1,500 gp; (20+) one art object worth 2,500 gp (13+) one magic item of level 1d4 + 11
12	(11+) 4d12 × 100 gp (13-19) 1d2 gems worth 1,000 gp; (20+) one gem worth 5,000 gp (17-18) 1d3 art objects worth 1,500 gp; (19+) one art object worth 2,500 gp (13+) one magic item of level 1d4 + 12
13	(11+) 1d6 × 1,000 gp (13-19) 1d3 gems worth 1,000 gp; (20+) one gem worth 5,000 gp (17-19) one art object worth 2,500 gp; (20+) one art object worth 7,500 gp (13+) one magic item of level 1d4 + 13
14	(11-19) 1d8 × 1,000 gp; (20+) 1d6 × 10 pp (13-18) 1d4 gems worth 1000 gp; (19+) one gem worth 5,000 gp (17-19) 1d2 art objects worth 2,500 gp; (20+) one art object worth 7,500 gp (13+) one magic item of level 1d4 + 14
15	(11-18) 1d10 × 1,000 gp; (19+) 1d8 × 10 pp (13-17) 1d4 gems worth 1,000 gp; (18+) one gem worth 5,000 gp (17-18) 1d2 art objects worth 2,500 gp; (19+) one art object worth 7,500 gp (13+) one magic item of level 1d4 + 15
16	(11-17) 2d8 × 1,000 gp; (18+) 2d8 × 10 pp (13+) 1d2 gems worth 5,000 gp (17-18) 1d6 art objects worth 1,500 gp; (19+) one art object worth 7,500 gp (13+) one magic item of level 1d4 + 16
17	(11-16) 4d6 × 1,000 gp; (17+) 4d6 × 10 pp (13+) 1d3 gems worth 5,000 gp (17-19) one art object worth 7,500 gp; (20+) one art object worth 15,000 gp (13+) one magic item of level 1d4 + 17
18	(11-14) 4d8 × 1,000 gp; (15+) 4d8 × 10 pp (13+) 1d4 gems worth 5,000 gp (17-19) 1d3 art objects worth 7,500 gp; (20+) one art object worth 15,000 gp (13+) one magic item of level 1d4 + 18
19	(11-12) 4d10 × 1,000 gp; (13+) 4d10 × 10 pp (13+) 1d6 gems worth 5,000 gp (17-19) 1d3 art objects worth 7,500 gp; (20+) one art object worth 15,000 gp (13+) one magic item of level 1d4 + 19
20	(11-11) 4d12 × 1,000 gp; (12+) 4d12 × 10 pp (13+) 1d8 gems worth 5,000 gp (17-19) 1d3 art objects worth 7,500 gp; (20+) one art object worth 15,000 gp (13+) one magic item of level 1d4 + 20

TREASURE BY PARTY LEVEL (EPIC TIER)

Party Level	Treasure
21	(11-20) 1d8 × 100 pp (13+) 2d6 gems worth 5,000 gp (16-18) 1d3 art objects worth 15,000 gp; (19+) one object worth 50,000 gp (13+) one magic item of level 1d4 + 21
22	(11-20) 1d12 × 100 pp (13+) 2d8 gems worth 5,000 gp (16-18) 1d6 art objects worth 15,000 gp; (19+) 1d2 objects worth 50,000 gp (13+) one magic item of level 1d4 + 22
23	(11-20) 2d8 × 100 pp (13+) 2d8 gems worth 5,000 gp (16-17) 1d8 art objects worth 15,000 gp; (18+) 1d3 objects worth 50,000 gp (13+) one magic item of level 1d4 + 23
24	(11-19) 2d10 × 100 pp; (20+) 1d3 x 5 ad (13+) 2d6 gems worth 5,000 gp (16-17) 1d10 art objects worth 15,000 gp; (18+) 1d6 objects worth 50,000 gp (13+) one magic item of level 1d4 + 24
25	(11-19) 2d12 × 100 pp; (20+) 1d4 x 5 ad (13+) 2d4 gems worth 5,000 gp (15-16) 2d8 art objects worth 15,000 gp; (17+) 1d6 objects worth 50,000 gp (13+) one magic item of level 1d4 + 25
26	(11-18) 1d4 × 1,000 pp; (19+) 1d6 x 5 ad (13+) 2d6 gems worth 5,000 gp (15-16) 3d6 art objects worth 15,000 gp; (17+) 1d12 objects worth 50,000 gp (13+) one magic item of level 1d4 + 26
27	(11-18) 1d6 × 1,000 pp; (19+) 2d6 x 5 ad (13+) 2d8 gems worth 5,000 gp (15-16) 3d6 art objects worth 15,000 gp; (17+) 3d6 objects worth 50,000 gp (13+) one magic item of level 1d3 + 27
28	(11-17) 1d8 × 1,000 pp; (18+) 2d8 x 5 ad (13+) 3d6 art objects worth 50,000 gp (13+) one magic item of level 1d2 + 28
29	(11-17) 1d10 × 1,000 pp; (18+) 3d6 x 5 ad (13+) 2d12 art objects worth 50,000 gp (13+) one magic item of level 30
30	(11-16) 1d12 × 1,000 pp; (17+) 2d12 x 5 ad (13+) 4d6 art objects worth 50,000 gp (13-18) one magic item of level 30; (19+) two items of level 30

MAGIC ITEMS

Magic items fall into several broad categories: armor, weapons, implements, clothing and jewelry, wondrous items, and potions. Items in a particular category tend to have similar effects. For example, magic weapons give bonuses when a character attacks with them, and magic boots typically have powers or properties related to movement. Aside from those generalities, magic items have a wide variety of powers and properties. Wondrous items in particular provide a wide variety of useful tools, from a *bag of holding* to a *flying carpet*. Whatever an item's effects, the item's description indicates how a character accesses them.

Item Slots

Within the broad category of clothing and jewelry, items are grouped by kind—whether the item is worn on the head or the feet, for example. These seven groups are called item slots: arms, feet, hands, head, neck, rings (two slots), and waist.

Item slots provide a practical limit to the number of magic items a character can wear and use. A character can benefit from only one magic item worn in the arms slot even if, practically speaking, the character can wear bracers and carry a shield at the same time.

The character benefits from the item that was put on first; any other item put in the same item slot doesn't function until the character takes off the first item. Sometimes there are physical limitations as well; a character can't wear two helms at the same time, for instance.

Identifying Magic Items

Most of the time, adventurers can determine the properties and powers of a magic item during a short rest. In the course of handling the item for a few minutes, they discover what the item is and what it does. A character can identify one magic item per short rest.

Rare magic items might be a bit harder to identify. You can ask the player for an Arcana check (hard DC) to identify the properties and powers of a rare item, or even send the adventurers on a special quest to identify or to unlock the powers of such a powerful item.

Prices

The purchase price of a permanent magic item depends on its level, as shown on the Magic Item Prices table. The purchase price of a consumable item (such as a potion) is much lower than the price of a permanent item of the same level. The sale price of a magic item (the amount a character gets from selling an item) is one-fifth of the purchase price.

MAGIC ITEM PRICES

Item Level	Purchase Price (gp)	Sale Price (gp)	Item Level	Purchase Price (gp)	Sale Price (gp)
1	360	72	16	45,000	9,000
2	520	104	17	65,000	13,000
3	680	136	18	85,000	17,000
4	840	168	19	105,000	21,000
5	1,000	200	20	125,000	25,000
6	1,800	360	21	225,000	45,000
7	2,600	520	22	325,000	65,000
8	3,400	680	23	425,000	85,000
9	4,200	840	24	525,000	105,000
10	5,000	1,000	25	625,000	125,000
11	9,000	1,800	26	1,125,000	225,000
12	13,000	2,600	27	1,625,000	325,000
13	17,000	3,400	28	2,125,000	425,000
14	21,000	4,200	29	2,625,000	525,000
15	25,000	5,000	30	3,125,000	625,000

Reading a Magic Item

Here's a sample magic item, the *holy avenger* weapon.

Holy Avenger

Level 25+ Rare

The most prized weapon of any paladin.

Lvl 25 +5 625,000 gp Lvl 30 +6 3,125,000 gp

Weapon: Axe, hammer, heavy blade

Enhancement: Attack rolls and damage rolls

Critical: +1d6 radiant damage per point of enhancement bonus, and you can spend a healing surge

Property: Your radiant powers deal 1d10 extra radiant damage when used through the weapon.

Power (Daily): Minor Action. You and each ally within 10 squares of you gain a +5 power bonus to Fortitude, Reflex, and Will until the end of your next turn.

Special: A *holy avenger* can be used as a holy symbol. It adds its enhancement bonus to attack rolls and damage rolls and the extra damage granted by its property (if applicable) when used in this manner. You do not gain your weapon proficiency bonus to an attack roll when using a *holy avenger* as an implement.

Name, Level, and Rarity The name of the magic item, the item's level, and its rarity (common, uncommon, or rare; see page 245) appear on the first line of the description.

If an item's level entry ends with a plus sign, that item is available at more than one level, with higher-level versions having a greater enhancement bonus or more potent powers and properties as described later in the item's description.

Example: The *holy avenger* is available as a 25th-level item and also comes in a higher-level version. It's a rare item, no longer created in the current age and carrying wondrous powers beyond the norm for magic items.

Description The next entry gives a brief description of the item, sometimes explaining what it does in plain language, other times offering flavorful information about its appearance, origin, effect, or place in the world. This material isn't rules text; when you need to know the exact effect, look at the rules text below.

Category and Price The next line or lines indicate the magic item's various levels and enhancement bonuses (if applicable) and the price for each version of the item. For weapons, the line beneath this information tells you which weapon groups can be enchanted with that set of qualities, and for armor, it notes the same for the five types of armor (plus clothing). For implements, it shows the specific kind of implement. For clothing items, the entry appears as "Item Slot" followed by the appropriate slot.

The magic item's purchase price is either a single number (for an item with a fixed level) or a list of values.

Example: The price of a *holy avenger* (as well as its enhancement bonus) depends on its level. The 25th-level version is a +5 weapon and costs 625,000 gp, and the 30th-level version is a +6 weapon and costs 3,125,000 gp. It's a weapon, and it's found as various kinds of axes, hammers, and heavy blades.

Enhancement For items that give an enhancement bonus, this entry specifies what that bonus applies to: AC, other defenses, or attack rolls and damage rolls.

Magic weapons and implements grant their enhancement bonus to attack rolls and damage rolls only when the wielder uses powers through the weapon or the implement (or directly from the weapon or the implement, for items that have attack powers).

A power's description indicates if it functions through the use of a weapon or an implement. Each class description indicates which implements (if any) a character of that class is allowed to use when delivering powers. For example, a cleric can wear a holy symbol to use implement powers, while a wizard can wield an orb, a staff, or a wand.

Example: Because a *holy avenger* is a magic weapon, its enhancement bonus applies to the user's weapon attack rolls and damage rolls.

Critical For magic weapons and implements, this entry describes what happens when a creature scores a critical hit using that item. Just as with an enhancement bonus, this effect applies only for attacks that are delivered through the weapon or the implement. (A wizard's *fireball* can't benefit from the critical hit effect noted for the magic dagger she carries, for example.)

Unless noted otherwise, the damage type of this extra damage is the same as the normal damage type for the weapon. An attack that does not deal damage still does not deal damage on a critical hit.

Example: A *holy avenger* deals an extra 5d6 or an extra 6d6 (depending on its enhancement bonus) damage on a critical hit and also allows the wielder to spend a healing surge.

Property Many magic items have a special property that is constantly active, or active in certain circumstances. A property doesn't normally require any action to use, although some properties allow you to turn them off (or on again). Unless otherwise noted, a magic item property remains active for a creature only while it wears the item (in the case of a wearable item such as armor) or wields the item.

Example: When you're wielding a *holy avenger*, all your radiant powers deal extra damage when you use the weapon to deliver them. You don't need to turn this property on or off.

Power Some uncommon and most rare magic items have a special power. This entry, when present in an item description, includes the action required to use the power and the effect of the power. In some cases, it might also specify the circumstances in which the power can be used (for instance, only if the wielder is bloodied). In general, magic item powers follow the same rules as other powers.

Like other powers, magic item powers often have keywords, which indicate the powers' damage or effect types. When you use a magic item as part of a racial power or a class power, the keywords of the item's power and the other power all apply.

Like other powers, magic item powers are sometimes at-will powers, sometimes encounter powers, and sometimes daily powers. Magic item powers have two other categories as well: healing surge powers and consumable powers.

At-Will: These powers can be used as often as their action types allow.

Encounter: These powers can be used once per encounter and are recharged when their user takes a short rest.

Daily: A magic item's daily power can be used once per day and is recharged when its user takes an extended rest.

Healing Surge: You begin with one use of the power per day, like a daily power.

You can recharge this item's power by taking a standard action to funnel your vitality into the item, spending a healing surge in the process. Spending a healing surge in this way doesn't restore hit points, and this standard action is separate from the action required to activate the item's power.

Consumable: Some items, particularly potions, contain one-use powers that are expended when used.

Example: Once per day, you can use a *holy avenger* to increase the defenses of you and your allies. This power renews when you take an extended rest.

Special If any special rules or restrictions on the item's use exist, here's where you find them.

The rest of this chapter describes a broad selection of magic items of all levels, presented alphabetically within each category.

Armor

Magic armor adds an enhancement bonus to AC, so a set of +5 *black iron wyrmscale* adds a total of 15 to the wearer's Armor Class (10 from the scale armor and 5 from the enhancement bonus). If an adventurer is not proficient with the armor type, the adventurer takes a -2 penalty to attack rolls and to Reflex, but still gains the enhancement bonus of the magic armor.

The category determines what kind of armors can be enchanted with that particular set of qualities. "Any" includes all armors: cloth, leather, hide, chainmail, scale, and plate.

Armor of Durability

Level 4+ Common

When your allies rely on you to keep fighting, this armor helps keep you in the fray.

Lvl 4	+1	840 gp	Lvl 19	+4	105,000 gp
Lvl 9	+2	4,200 gp	Lvl 24	+5	525,000 gp
Lvl 14	+3	21,000 gp	Lvl 29	+6	2,625,000 gp

Armor: Hide, chain, scale, plate

Enhancement: AC

Property: You gain an item bonus to your healing surge value equal to the armor's enhancement bonus.

Delver's Armor

Level 3+ Uncommon

A popular armor among adventurers, now as in ancient times.

Lvl 3	+1	680 gp	Lvl 18	+4	85,000 gp
Lvl 8	+2	3,400 gp	Lvl 23	+5	425,000 gp
Lvl 13	+3	17,000 gp	Lvl 28	+6	2,125,000 gp

Armor: Any

Enhancement: AC

Power (Daily): No Action. You gain a +2 power bonus to a saving throw you just rolled; use the new result.

Dwarven Armor

Level 2+ Uncommon

Crafted by the finest dwarf armorsmiths of old, this armor is decorated with the faces of dwarven ancestors.

Lvl 2	+1	520 gp	Lvl 17	+4	65,000 gp
Lvl 7	+2	2,600 gp	Lvl 22	+5	325,000 gp
Lvl 12	+3	13,000 gp	Lvl 27	+6	1,625,000 gp

Armor: Chain, scale, plate

Enhancement: AC

Property: You gain an item bonus to Endurance checks equal to the armor's enhancement bonus.

Power (Daily ♦ Healing): Free Action. You regain hit points as if you had spent a healing surge.

Elven Battle Armor

Level 8+ Uncommon

There's no mistaking the forest motif woven into elven battle armor.

Lvl 8	+2	3,400 gp	Lvl 23	+5	425,000 gp
Lvl 13	+3	17,000 gp	Lvl 28	+6	2,125,000 gp
Lvl 18	+4	85,000 gp			

Armor: Leather, hide

Enhancement: AC

Property: You gain a +5 item bonus to saving throws against being slowed or immobilized.

Power (Encounter): Minor Action. You gain a +2 power bonus to speed until the end of your next turn.

Mantle of the Seventh Wind

Level 23+ Rare

This enchanted robe or jacket catches the fickle wind to bear you aloft.

Lvl 23	+5	425,000 gp	Lvl 28	+6	2,125,000 gp
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Armor: Cloth

Enhancement: AC

Property: You have a fly speed equal to your speed.

Weapons

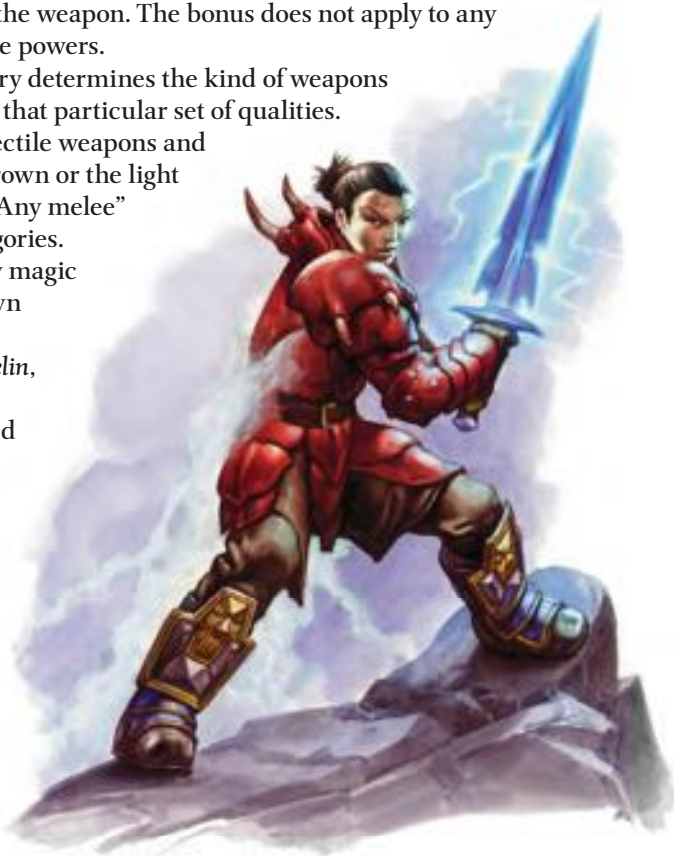
A magic weapon adds an enhancement bonus to attack rolls and damage rolls of attack powers used with the weapon. The bonus does not apply to any ongoing damage dealt by the powers.

A magic weapon's category determines the kind of weapons that can be enchanted with that particular set of qualities.

"Any ranged" includes projectile weapons and weapons with the heavy thrown or the light thrown property. "Any" or "Any melee" includes all applicable categories.

Thrown Weapons: Any magic light thrown or heavy thrown weapon, from the lowly +1 handaxe to a +6 flaming javelin, automatically returns to its wielder's hand after a ranged attack with the weapon is resolved.

Catching a returning thrown weapon is a free action; if you do not wish (or are unable) to catch the weapon, it falls at your feet in your space.



Dragonslayer Weapon

Level 9+ Uncommon

The bane of dragonkind.

Lvl 9	+2	4,200 gp	Lvl 24	+5	525,000 gp
Lvl 14	+3	21,000 gp	Lvl 29	+6	2,625,000 gp
Lvl 19	+4	105,000 gp			

Weapon: Any

Enhancement: Attack rolls and damage rolls

Critical: +1d8 damage per point of enhancement bonus, or +1d12 damage per point of enhancement bonus against dragons

Property: This weapon provides resistance against a dragon's *breath weapon* power, as shown below.

Level 9: Resist 10

Level 14 or 19: Resist 20

Level 24 or 29: Resist 30

Power (Daily): Minor Action. Your next attack with this weapon against a dragon, if made before the end of your turn, gains a +5 power bonus to the attack roll and automatically ignores any resistance the dragon has.

Flaming Weapon

Level 5+ Uncommon

You can will this weapon to burst into flame.

Lvl 5	+1	1,000 gp	Lvl 20	+4	125,000 gp
Lvl 10	+2	5,000 gp	Lvl 25	+5	625,000 gp
Lvl 15	+3	25,000 gp	Lvl 30	+6	3,125,000 gp

Weapon: Any

Enhancement: Attack rolls and damage rolls

Critical: +1d6 fire damage per point of enhancement bonus

Power (At-Will ♦ Fire): Free Action. All untyped damage dealt by this weapon changes to fire damage. Another free action returns the damage to normal.

Power (Daily ♦ Fire): Free Action. *Trigger:* You hit with the weapon. *Effect:* The attack deals 1d6 extra fire damage, and the target takes ongoing 5 fire damage (save ends).

Level 15 or 20: 2d6 fire damage and ongoing 10 fire damage.

Level 25 or 30: 3d6 fire damage and ongoing 15 fire damage.

Holy Avenger

Level 25+ Rare

The most prized weapon of any paladin.

Lvl 25	+5	625,000 gp	Lvl 30	+6	3,125,000 gp
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Weapon: Axe, hammer, heavy blade

Enhancement: Attack rolls and damage rolls

Critical: +1d6 radiant damage per point of enhancement bonus, and you can spend a healing surge

Property: Your radiant powers deal 1d10 extra radiant damage when used through the weapon.

Power (Daily): Minor Action. You and each ally within 10 squares of you gain a +5 power bonus to Fortitude, Reflex, and Will until the end of your next turn.

Special: A *holy avenger* can be used as a holy symbol. It adds its enhancement bonus to attack rolls and damage rolls and the extra damage granted by its property (if applicable) when used in this manner. You do not gain your weapon proficiency bonus to an attack roll when using a *holy avenger* as an implement.

Lifedrinker Weapon

Level 5+ Uncommon

This weapon transfers an enemy's vitality to you.

Lvl 5	+1	1,000 gp	Lvl 20	+4	125,000 gp
Lvl 10	+2	5,000 gp	Lvl 25	+5	625,000 gp
Lvl 15	+3	25,000 gp	Lvl 30	+6	3,125,000 gp

Weapon: Any melee

Enhancement: Attack rolls and damage rolls

Critical: +1d6 necrotic damage per point of enhancement bonus

Property: Whenever you drop an enemy to 0 hit points with a melee attack made with this weapon, you gain 5 temporary hit points.

Level 15 or 20: 10 temporary hit points.

Level 25 or 30: 15 temporary hit points.

Luckblade

Level 3+ Uncommon

Luck favors the bold—and the wielder of this blade.

Lvl 3	+1	680 gp	Lvl 18	+4	85,000 gp
Lvl 8	+2	3,400 gp	Lvl 23	+5	425,000 gp
Lvl 13	+3	17,000 gp	Lvl 28	+6	2,125,000 gp

Weapon: Heavy blade, light blade

Enhancement: Attack rolls and damage rolls

Critical: +1d8 damage per point of enhancement bonus

Power (Daily): Free Action. *Trigger:* You make an attack roll with this weapon and don't like the result. *Effect:* Reroll the triggering attack roll and use the second result, even if it's lower.

Vorpal Weapon

Level 30 Rare

There is nothing as sharp as the bite of a vorpal blade.

Lvl 30	+6	3,125,000 gp
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Weapon: Axe, heavy blade

Enhancement: Attack rolls and damage rolls

Critical: +1d12 damage per point of enhancement bonus

Property: Whenever you roll the maximum result on any damage die for this weapon, roll that die again and add the additional result to the damage total. If a reroll results in another maximum damage result, roll it again and keep adding.

Power (Daily): Free Action. You use this power when you hit with the weapon. The attack deals 3d12 extra damage.

Implements

An adventurer who has proficiency with an implement such as a holy symbol, orb, rod, staff, totem, or wand adds its enhancement bonus to attack rolls and damage rolls of attacks made with the implement, and he or she can use its properties and powers. The bonus does not apply to any ongoing damage dealt by the powers.

Unless noted otherwise, a creature can't make melee attacks with an implement.

Holy Symbols

A holy symbol represents a deity and takes the shape of an aspect of the god. Unlike other implements, an adventurer need only to wear a holy symbol for its property or power to function. If he or she wears or holds more than one holy symbol, none of these symbols function until only one remains.

Symbol of Battle

Level 5+ Uncommon

This holy symbol is favored by battle clerics and warpriests.

Lvl 5	+1	1,000 gp	Lvl 20	+4	125,000 gp
Lvl 10	+2	5,000 gp	Lvl 25	+5	625,000 gp
Lvl 15	+3	25,000 gp	Lvl 30	+6	3,125,000 gp

Implement (Holy Symbol)

Enhancement: Attack rolls and damage rolls

Critical: +1d8 damage per point of enhancement bonus

Power (Daily): Free Action. You use this power when you hit with an attack using this holy symbol. The attack deals 1d10 extra damage.

Level 15 or 20: 2d10 extra damage.

Level 25 or 30: 3d10 extra damage.

Symbol of Hope

Level 3+ Uncommon

The power of your faith makes it easier for allies to recover from debilitating effects.

Lvl 3	+1	680 gp	Lvl 18	+4	85,000 gp
Lvl 8	+2	3,400 gp	Lvl 23	+5	425,000 gp
Lvl 13	+3	17,000 gp	Lvl 28	+6	2,125,000 gp

Implement (Holy Symbol)

Enhancement: Attack rolls and damage rolls

Critical: +1d6 damage per point of enhancement bonus

Power (Daily): Free Action. **Trigger:** You hit an enemy with an attack made with this holy symbol. **Effect:** You or an ally within 5 squares of you can make a saving throw with a +5 power bonus.

Symbol of Life

Level 2+ Uncommon

The power of your faith adds energy to your healing prayers.

Lvl 2	+1	520 gp	Lvl 17	+4	65,000 gp
Lvl 7	+2	2,600 gp	Lvl 22	+5	325,000 gp
Lvl 12	+3	13,000 gp	Lvl 27	+6	1,625,000 gp

Implement (Holy Symbol)

Enhancement: Attack rolls and damage rolls

Critical: +1d6 damage per point of enhancement bonus

Power (Daily): Free Action. **Trigger:** You hit an enemy with an attack made with this holy symbol. **Effect:** Until the end of your turn, any creature healed by your encounter powers and daily powers regains 1d6 additional hit points.

Level 12 or 17: 2d6 additional hit points.

Level 22 or 27: 3d6 additional hit points.

Orbs

An orb is a heavy, round object, usually made of glass or crystal, of a size to fit comfortably in the palm of the hand. Orbs range in color from clear glass to solid ebony, with storms of color erupting deep within their depths.

Orb of Drastic Resolutions

Level 13+ Uncommon

A sphere of brilliant purple glass, alight with ribbons of crimson dancing beneath its smooth surface.

Lvl 13 +3 17,000 gp Lvl 23 +5 425,000 gp

Lvl 18 +4 85,000 gp Lvl 28 +6 2,125,000 gp

Implement (Orb)

Enhancement: Attack rolls and damage rolls

Critical: +1d6 damage per plus

Power (Daily): Free Action. *Trigger:* You reduce an enemy to 0 hit points with an attack made with this orb. *Effect:* Immobilize (save ends) or weaken (save ends) a different enemy within 10 squares of you.

Orb of Inevitable Continuance

Level 3+ Uncommon

A sphere of gray crystal that appears as a ball of solid mist.

Lvl 3 +1 680 gp Lvl 18 +4 85,000 gp

Lvl 8 +2 3,400 gp Lvl 23 +5 425,000 gp

Lvl 13 +3 17,000 gp Lvl 28 +6 2,125,000 gp

Implement (Orb)

Enhancement: Attack rolls and damage rolls

Critical: +1d6 damage per plus

Power (Daily): Free Action. *Trigger:* You hit an enemy with an attack made with this orb. *Effect:* One of your powers that is due to end at the end of this turn instead lasts until the end of your next turn.

Orb of Sanguinary Repercussions

Level 5+ Uncommon

This sphere of brilliant crimson hastens injured enemies to their doom.

Lvl 5 +1 1,000 gp Lvl 20 +4 125,000 gp

Lvl 10 +2 5,000 gp Lvl 25 +5 625,000 gp

Lvl 15 +3 25,000 gp Lvl 30 +6 3,125,000 gp

Implement (Orb)

Enhancement: Attack rolls and damage rolls

Critical: +1d6 damage per plus, or +1d10 damage per plus against bloodied creatures

Power (Daily): Free Action. *Trigger:* You hit an enemy with an attack made with this orb. *Effect:* Each bloodied creature within 5 squares of you takes 1d8 damage.

Level 15 or 20: 2d8 damage.

Level 25 or 30: 3d8 damage.

Rods

A rod is a short, heavy cylinder, typically covered in mystic runes or inscribed crystals.

Hexer's Rod

Level 3+ Uncommon

Crafted in ancient times by goblin shamans, this rod channels their tricky, underhanded magic.

Lvl 3	+1	680 gp	Lvl 18	+4	85,000 gp
Lvl 8	+2	3,400 gp	Lvl 23	+5	425,000 gp
Lvl 13	+3	17,000 gp	Lvl 28	+6	2,125,000 gp

Implement (Rod)

Enhancement: Attack rolls and damage rolls

Critical: +1d6 damage per plus

Power (Daily): Free Action. *Trigger:* You hit an enemy with an attack power using this rod.

Effect: The next time that enemy misses you with an attack during this encounter, you can shift 3 squares as an immediate reaction, and you gain concealment against that enemy until the end of your next turn.

Rod of Deadly Casting

Level 2+ Common

Infused with war magic and covered in death symbols, this rod amplifies lethal magical strikes

Lvl 2	+1	520 gp	Lvl 17	+4	65,000 gp
Lvl 7	+2	2,600 gp	Lvl 22	+5	325,000 gp
Lvl 12	+3	13,000 gp	Lvl 27	+6	1,625,000 gp

Implement (Rod)

Enhancement: Attack rolls and damage rolls

Critical: +1d10 damage per plus

Property: When you score a critical hit with this rod, you can reroll one of the extra damage dice granted by a critical hit. You must use the second result, even if it's lower.

Staves

A staff is a shaft of wood that is typically as tall or slightly taller than its wielder. A staff is sometimes crowned with a decorative crystal or some other symbol of power. A staff is an implement that can also be used as a weapon (treat it as a magic quarterstaff). Even a wielder who doesn't have proficiency with the staff implement can use it as a weapon, but that character cannot use its properties or powers, only its enhancement bonus and critical hit effect.

Staff of Storms

Level 5+ Uncommon

This staff, covered in lightning runes, enhances the power of lightning and thunder spells.

Lvl 5	+1	1,000 gp	Lvl 20	+4	125,000 gp
Lvl 10	+2	5,000 gp	Lvl 25	+5	625,000 gp
Lvl 15	+3	25,000 gp	Lvl 30	+6	3,125,000 gp

Implement (Staff)

Enhancement: Attack rolls and damage rolls

Critical: +1d6 lightning or thunder damage per plus

Power (Daily ♦ Lightning, Thunder): Free Action. *Trigger:* You hit an enemy with an attack power that has the lightning or the thunder keyword using this staff. *Effect:* After resolving the power, every creature in a close blast 3 centered on you takes 1d8 lightning and thunder damage.

Level 15 or 20: 2d8 lightning and thunder damage.

Level 25 or 30: 3d8 lightning and thunder damage.

Staff of the Magi

Level 15+ Rare

In the hands of a powerful wizard, this staff is a potent arsenal of magical might.

Lvl 15	+3	25,000 gp	Lvl 25	+5	625,000 gp
Lvl 20	+4	125,000 gp	Lvl 30	+6	3,125,000 gp

Implement (Staff)

Enhancement: Attack rolls and damage rolls

Critical: +1d6 damage per point of enhancement bonus

Property: You gain an item bonus to Arcana checks equal to the staff's enhancement bonus.

Power (Encounter): Minor Action. An adjacent conjuration or zone is destroyed. All its effects end, including those that normally last until a target saves.

Power (Daily): Free Action. You regain the use of an expended arcane encounter power of the staff's level or lower.

Power (Daily ♦ Zone): Minor Action. You create a zone in a close burst 2. The zone lasts until the end of the encounter and remains centered on you when you move. As a move action, you can slide each creature within the zone 3 squares.

Staff of Winter

Level 4+ Uncommon

This staff is engraved with winter symbols and is cold to the touch. It adds to the effect of your cold spells.

Lvl 4	+1	840 gp	Lvl 19	+4	105,000 gp
Lvl 9	+2	4,200 gp	Lvl 24	+5	525,000 gp
Lvl 14	+3	21,000 gp	Lvl 29	+6	2,625,000 gp

Implement (Staff)

Enhancement: Attack rolls and damage rolls

Critical: +1d6 cold damage per plus

Power (Daily): Free Action. *Trigger:* You hit an enemy with an attack that has the cold keyword using this staff. *Effect:* Each enemy within 3 squares of you is immobilized (save ends).

Wands

A wand is a slender, tapered piece of wood, enchanted to channel arcane energy.

Lightning Wand

Level 3+ Uncommon

With this wand, your lightning powers crackle with extra energy.

Lvl 3	+1	680 gp	Lvl 18	+4	85,000 gp
Lvl 8	+2	3,400 gp	Lvl 23	+5	425,000 gp
Lvl 13	+3	17,000 gp	Lvl 28	+6	2,125,000 gp

Implement (Wand)

Enhancement: Attack rolls and damage rolls

Critical: +1d8 lightning damage per point of enhancement bonus

Property: You gain a +1 item bonus to damage rolls when you use this wand to attack with a lightning power.

Level 13 or 18: +2 item bonus.

Level 23 or 28: +3 item bonus.

Power (Encounter): Standard Action. As the wizard's *arc lightning* power.

Master's Wand of Magic Missile

Level 4+ Uncommon

Your magic missiles impact a foe with the force of a bull rush

Lvl 4	+1	840 gp	Lvl 19	+4	105,000 gp
Lvl 9	+2	4,200 gp	Lvl 24	+5	525,000 gp
Lvl 14	+3	21,000 gp	Lvl 29	+6	2,625,000 gp

Implement (Wand)

Enhancement: Attack rolls and damage rolls

Critical: +1d8 damage per point of enhancement bonus

Property: When you damage a target with the *magic missile* power used through this wand, you can push the target 1 square.

Power (Encounter): Standard Action. As the wizard's *magic missile* power.

Precise Wand of Shock Sphere

Level 10+ Uncommon

Wielding this wand, you display deadly accuracy with @@.

Lvl 10	+2	5,000 gp	Lvl 20	+4	125,000 gp
Lvl 15	+3	25,000 gp	Lvl 25	+5	625,000 gp
			Lvl 30	+6	3,125,000 gp

Implement (Wand)

Enhancement: Attack rolls and damage rolls

Critical: +1d6 damage per point of enhancement bonus

Property: You gain a +1 item bonus to *shock sphere* attack rolls made using this wand.

Power (Daily): Standard Action. As the wizard's *shock sphere* power. If your first attack roll with the power hits, you score a critical hit.

Arms Slot Items

Shields and bracers contain powers that protect one from harm. Some magic shields are always light shields, others are always heavy shields, but most can be found as either kind of shield.

Bashing Shield

Level 5+ Uncommon

This stout shield can be used to force your opponents back.

Lvl 5 1,000 gp Lvl 25 625,000 gp
Lvl 15 25,000 gp

Item Slot: Arms

Power (Daily): Free Action. *Trigger:* You hit an enemy with a melee attack. *Effect:* You push the enemy up to 1d4 squares after applying the attack's effects.

Level 15: Push up to 2d4 squares.

Level 25: Push up to 3d4 squares.

Bracers of Defense

Level 7+ Uncommon

These enchanted armbands can be activated to reduce the damage you take from a single attack.

Lvl 7 2,600 gp Lvl 27 1,625,000 gp
Lvl 17 65,000 gp

Item Slot: Arms

Power (Daily): Immediate Interrupt. *Trigger:* You are hit by a melee attack. *Effect:* Reduce the damage dealt to you by the attack by 10.

Level 17: Reduce the damage dealt by 20.

Level 27: Reduce the damage dealt by 30.

Feet Slot Items

Boots and greaves typically contain powers that enhance the wearer's speed, provide additional movement, or otherwise assist in movement-related situations.

Acrobat Boots

Level 2 Uncommon

These enchanted boots enhance your acrobatic skills.

Item Slot: Feet 520 gp

Property: You gain a +1 item bonus to Acrobatics checks.

Power (At-Will): Minor Action. You stand up from prone.

Battlestrider Greaves

Level 12 Common

This enchanted leg armor increases your speed when wearing heavy armor.

Item Slot: Feet 13,000 gp

Property: You gain a +1 item bonus to speed while wearing heavy armor.

Boots of Striding and Springing

Level 14 Uncommon

These enchanted boots increase your speed if you wear light armor or no armor and enhance your jumping capability.

Item Slot: Feet 21,000 gp

Property: You gain a +1 item bonus to speed while wearing light or no armor.

Property: You gain a +5 item bonus to Athletics checks made to jump.

Winged Boots

Level 13 Rare

These enchanted boots protect you from falling damage and can be activated to allow you to fly.

Item Slot: Feet 17,000 gp

Property: You take no damage from a fall and always land on your feet.

Power (Daily): Minor Action. You gain a fly speed equal to your speed until the end of the encounter.

Hands Slot Items

Gloves and gauntlets contain powers that assist with skill checks, increase attack rolls and damage rolls, and even allow rerolls in some situations.

Gauntlets of Ogre Power

Level 5 Rare

These oversized armored gloves increase your strength and can be activated to increase your damage.

Item Slot: Hands 1,000 gp

Property: You gain a +1 item bonus to Athletics checks and Strength ability checks (but not Strength attacks).

Power (Daily): Minor Action. You gain a +2 power bonus to melee damage rolls until the end of the encounter.

Gloves of Storing

Level 9 Uncommon

Though these ornate chamois gloves fit snugly, your fingertips always seem just short of touching something within them.

Item Slot: Hands 4,200 gp

Power (At-Will): Minor Action. You touch an unattended item to store it in one of the gloves. Each glove can hold one item, and each item must weigh no more than 10 pounds. Items have no weight while within the gloves.

Power (At-Will): Minor Action. You cause an item stored within one glove to materialize in your hand. Weapons so produced are ready to wield, but items that require an additional action to equip (such as shields) must still be readied.

Head Slot Items

These items typically contain powers that enhance Intelligence-based and Wisdom-based skills, increase damage, and enhance senses.

Circlet of Authority

Level 7 Common

This simple metal headband improves your diplomatic and intimidation skills.

Item Slot: Head 2,600 gp

Property: You gain a +2 item bonus to Diplomacy checks and Intimidate checks.

Horned Helm

Level 6+ Uncommon

This horned helmet increases the damage you deal when making a charge attack.

Lvl 6	1,800 gp	Lvl 26	1,125,000 gp
Lvl 16	45,000 gp		

Item Slot: Head

Property: Your charge attacks deal 1d6 extra damage.

Level 16: 2d6 extra damage.

Level 26: 3d6 extra damage.

Ioun Stone of True Sight

Level 28 Rare

This dark blue rhomboid stone floats lightly in the air, granting you darkvision and greatly enhanced insight and perception.

Item Slot: Head 2,125,000 gp

Property: You gain darkvision and a +6 item bonus to Insight checks and Perception checks.

Power (Daily): Minor Action. Until the end of your next turn, you can clearly see creatures and objects within your line of sight, even if they are invisible or obscured.

Sustain Minor: The effect persists until the end of your next turn.

Neck Slot Items

Amulets and cloaks grant an enhancement bonus to Fortitude, Reflex, and Will. Many of them provide other benefits as well.

Amulet of False Life

Level 9+ Uncommon

This dark blue amulet with a crimson center increases your defenses and can be activated to grant you temporary hit points.

Lvl 9	+2	4,200 gp	Lvl 24	+5	525,000 gp
Lvl 14	+3	21,000 gp	Lvl 29	+6	2,625,000 gp
Lvl 19	+4	105,000 gp			

Item Slot: Neck

Enhancement: Fortitude, Reflex, and Will

Power (Daily): Minor Action. You use this power when you are bloodied to gain temporary hit points equal to your healing surge value.

Amulet of Health

Level 3+ Uncommon

This golden amulet increases your defenses and resists poison.

Lvl 3	+1	680 gp	Lvl 18	+4	85,000 gp
Lvl 8	+2	3,400 gp	Lvl 23	+5	425,000 gp
Lvl 13	+3	17,000 gp	Lvl 28	+6	2,125,000 gp

Item Slot: Neck

Enhancement: Fortitude, Reflex, and Will

Property: You gain resist 5 poison.

Level 13 or 18: Resist 10 poison.

Level 23 or 28: Resist 15 poison.

Cloak of Invisibility

Level 23+ Rare

This gold-hemmed cloak increases your defenses and can be activated to turn you invisible for a short time.

Lvl 23 +5 425,000 gp Lvl 28 +6 2,125,000 gp

Item Slot: Neck

Enhancement: Fortitude, Reflex, and Will

Power (Daily ♦ Illusion): Standard Action. You become invisible until the end of the encounter or until you are hit by a melee attack or a ranged attack.

Rings

Magic rings provide properties and powers that aid characters in a variety of ways, from healing and skill use to flying and teleportation. Rings are almost always rare magic items—items of wonder and legend—and most were forged during the Dawn War or the early ages of the world.

A character can wear and gain the benefit of up to two magic rings (one on each hand). If a character is wearing more than two magic rings at once, none of them function until the character is wearing no more than two.

Ring of Freedom of Movement

Level 15 Rare

This sky blue band seems to shimmer and move around your finger.

Item Slot: Ring 25,000 gp

Property: Gain a +2 item bonus to Acrobatics checks.

Power (Daily): Minor Action. Until the end of the encounter, you gain a +5 power bonus to checks made to escape a grab and a +5 power bonus to saving throws to end the immobilized, restrained, or slowed conditions.

If you've reached at least one milestone today, you can also move across difficult terrain as if it were normal until the end of the encounter.

Ring of Invisibility

Level 18 Rare

This simple golden ring bears Rellanic script etched lightly across its surface.

Item Slot: Ring 85,000 gp

Property: Gain a +4 item bonus to Stealth checks.

Power (Encounter ♦ Illusion): Standard Action. You become invisible until the end of your next turn.

If you've reached at least one milestone today, using this power requires only a minor action.

Ring of Protection

Level 17 Rare

This simple ring of white gold is engraved with a tiny shield.

Item Slot: Ring 65,000 gp

Property: Gain a +1 item bonus to saving throws.

Power (Daily): Immediate Interrupt. **Trigger:** You are hit by an enemy's attack. **Effect:** You gain a +2 power bonus to a single defense score against the attack.

If you've reached at least one milestone today, this bonus lasts until the start of your next turn instead.

Ring of Regeneration

Level 24 Rare

This ring of plain silver is adorned with a blood red ruby.

Item Slot: Ring 525,000 gp

Property: Gain a +3 item bonus to your healing surge value.

Power (Daily ♦ Healing): Minor Action. You regain one healing surge you've already used today.

If you've reached at least one milestone today, you also gain regeneration 10 until the end of the encounter or until you spend a healing surge.

Waist Slot Items

Belts typically contain powers or properties that improve Strength-based skills, healing, and resistances.

Belt of Sacrifice

Level 7+ Uncommon

This belt of leather allows you to help others heal.

Lvl 7 2,600 gp Lvl 27 1,625,000 gp

Lvl 17 65,000 gp

Item Slot: Waist

Property: Each ally within 5 squares of you gains a +1 item bonus to his or her healing surge value.

Level 17: +2 item bonus.

Level 27: +3 item bonus.

Power (Daily): Minor Action. You lose two healing surges. An ally within 5 squares of you regains one healing surge.

Ironskin Belt

Level 5+ Uncommon

The first of these belts of chain links was forged by a dwarf armorsmith enslaved by fire giants. It can be activated to provide protection against weapon attacks.

Lvl 5 1,000 gp Lvl 25 625,000 gp

Lvl 15 25,000 gp

Item Slot: Waist

Power (Daily): Minor Action. You gain resist 5 to weapon damage until the end of your next turn.

Level 15: Resist 10 to weapon damage.

Level 25: Resist 15 to weapon damage.

Wondrous Items

This category includes some of the most useful and interesting items in the game. They don't take up item slots and usually don't fall into any other classification, except level and rarity.

Bag of Holding

Level 5 Uncommon

This item appears to be a simple sack of brown canvas.

Wondrous Item 1,000 gp

Property: This bag can hold up to 200 pounds in weight or 20 cubic feet in volume, but it always weighs only 1 pound.

Drawing an item from the bag is a minor action.



Flying Carpet

Level 20 Rare

This 4-foot square of carpet is woven with intricate stitching and strange runes.

Wondrous Item 125,000 gp

Power (At-Will): Move Action. A creature on the carpet can mentally command it to fly 6 squares. The carpet has a maximum altitude of 10 squares. If no rider is upon it, it hovers in place 1 foot above the ground if it is unrolled or sits on the ground if it is rolled up.

The carpet's flight isn't entirely stable; while on the carpet, a rider takes a -2 penalty to AC and Reflex.

The carpet can carry one Medium or Small creature of no more than 300 pounds. If more than 300 pounds are placed on it, the carpet (and all it carries) falls to the ground, and the creature and all objects the carpet was holding take falling damage.

Handy Haversack

Level 10 Uncommon

This ordinary-looking backpack is surprisingly light.

Wondrous Item 5,000 gp

Property: This backpack can hold up to 1,000 pounds in weight or 100 cubic feet in volume, but it always weighs only 1 pound.

Drawing an item from the backpack is a minor action.

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ENCOUNTERS





Conditions

BLINDED

- ◆ The creature can't see, which means its targets have total concealment against it.
- ◆ The creature takes a -10 penalty to Perception checks.
- ◆ The creature grants combat advantage.
- ◆ The creature can't flank.

DAZED

- ◆ The creature doesn't get its normal complement of actions on its turn; it can take either a standard, a move, or a minor action. The creature can still take free actions.
- ◆ The creature can't take immediate actions or opportunity actions.
- ◆ The creature grants combat advantage.
- ◆ The creature can't flank.

DEAFENED

- ◆ The creature can't hear.
- ◆ The creature takes a -10 penalty to Perception checks.

DOMINATED

- ◆ The creature can't take actions. Instead, the dominator chooses a single action for the creature to take on the creature's turn: a standard, a move, a minor, or a free action. The only powers and other game features that the dominator can make the creature use are ones that can be used at will, such as at-will powers.
- ◆ The creature grants combat advantage.
- ◆ The creature can't flank.

DYING

- ◆ The creature is unconscious.
- ◆ The creature must make death saving throws.
- ◆ This condition ends immediately on the creature when it regains hit points.

GRABBED

- ◆ The creature is immobilized.
- ◆ Maintaining this condition on the creature occupies whatever appendage, object, or effect the grabber used to initiate the grab.
- ◆ This condition ends immediately on the creature if the grabber is subjected to an effect that prevents it from taking actions, or if the creature ends up outside the range of the grabbing power or effect.

HELPLESS

- ◆ The creature grants combat advantage.

IMMOBILIZED

- ◆ The creature can't move, unless it teleports or is pulled, pushed, or slid.

MARKED

- ◆ The creature takes a -2 penalty to attack rolls for any attack that doesn't include the marking creature as a target.
- ◆ A creature can be subjected to only one mark at a time, and a new mark supersedes an old one.
- ◆ A mark ends immediately when its creator dies or falls unconscious.

PETRIFIED

- ◆ The creature is unconscious.
- ◆ The creature has resist 20 to all damage.
- ◆ The creature doesn't age.

PRONE

- ◆ The creature is lying down. However, if the creature is climbing or flying, it falls.
- ◆ The only way the creature can move is by crawling, teleporting, or being pulled, pushed, or slid.
- ◆ The creature takes a -2 penalty to attack rolls.
- ◆ The creature grants combat advantage to attackers making melee attacks against it, but it gains a +2 bonus to all defenses against ranged attacks from attackers that aren't adjacent to it.

REMOVED FROM PLAY

- ◆ The creature can't take actions.
- ◆ The creature has neither line of sight nor line of effect to anything, and nothing has line of sight or line of effect to it.

RESTRAINED

- ◆ The creature can't move, unless it teleports. It can't even be pulled, pushed, or slid.
- ◆ The creature takes a -2 penalty to attack rolls.
- ◆ The creature grants combat advantage.

SLOWED

- ◆ The creature's speed becomes 2 if it was higher than that. This speed applies to all of the creature's movement modes (walking, flying, swimming, and so on), but it does not apply to forced movement against it,

teleportation, or any other movement that doesn't use the creature's speed. If a creature is subjected to this condition while it is moving using any of its speeds, it must stop if it has already moved at least 2 squares.

- ◆ The creature cannot benefit from bonuses to speed, although it can use powers and take actions, such as the run action, that allow it to move farther than its speed.

STUNNED

- ◆ The creature can't take actions.
- ◆ The creature grants combat advantage.
- ◆ The creature can't flank.
- ◆ The creature falls if it is flying, unless it can hover.

SURPRISED

- ◆ The creature can't take actions.
- ◆ The creature grants combat advantage.
- ◆ The creature can't flank.

UNCONSCIOUS

- ◆ The creature is helpless.
- ◆ The creature can't take actions.
- ◆ The creature takes a -5 penalty to all defenses.
- ◆ The creature is unaware of its surroundings.
- ◆ The creature falls prone, if possible.
- ◆ The creature can't flank.

WEAKENED

- ◆ The creature's attacks deal half damage. However, two kinds of damage that it deals are not affected: ongoing damage as well as damage that isn't delivered by an attack roll.

Healing a Dying Character

- ◆ **Regain Hit Points:** When a character is dying and receives healing, he or she goes to 0 hit points and then regains hit points from the healing effect. If the healing effect requires the character to spend a healing surge but he or she has none left, the character is restored to 1 hit point.
- ◆ **Become Conscious:** As soon as a character has a current hit point total that's higher than 0, he or she becomes conscious and is no longer dying. (The character is still prone until he or she takes an action to stand up.)

Death and Dying

- ◆ **Dying:** When a character's hit points drop to 0 or fewer, he or she falls unconscious and is dying. Any additional damage the character takes continues to reduce his or her current hit point total.
- ◆ **Death Saving Throw:** When a character is dying, he or she needs to make a saving throw at the end of his or her turn each round. The result of the saving throw determines how close the character is to death.
 - Lower than 10:** The character slips one step closer to death. If the character gets this result three times before taking a short or an extended rest, the character dies.

10-19: No change.

20 or higher: The character spends a healing surge. When the character does so, he or she is considered to have 0 hit points, and then the healing surge restores hit points as normal. The character is no longer dying, and he or she is conscious but still prone. If the character rolls 20 or higher but has no healing surges, the character's condition doesn't change.

- ◆ **Death:** When the character takes damage that reduces his or her current hit points to the character's bloodied value expressed as a negative number, the character dies.

DIFFICULTY CLASS BY LEVEL

Level	Easy DC	Moderate DC	Hard DC
1	8	12	19
2	9	13	20
3	9	13	21
4	10	14	21
5	10	15	22
6	11	15	23
7	11	16	23
8	12	16	24
9	12	17	25
10	13	18	26
11	13	19	27
12	14	20	28
13	14	20	29
14	15	21	29
15	15	22	30
16	16	22	31
17	16	23	31
18	17	23	32
19	17	24	33
20	18	25	34
21	19	26	35
22	20	27	36
23	20	27	37
24	21	28	37
25	21	29	38
26	22	29	39
27	22	30	39
28	23	30	40
29	23	31	41
30	24	32	42

DCS FOR COMMONLY USED SKILLS

Acrobatics	DC
Balance on narrow surface (less than 1 foot)	Moderate
Balance on unstable surface	Moderate
Balance on very narrow surface (less than 6 inches)	Hard
Balance on narrow and unstable surface	+5
Escape from restraints	Hard
Hop down 10 feet and remain standing	15

Arcana	DC
Identify conjuration or zone	Moderate (effect level)
Identify magical phenomenon	Hard (effect level)
Sense the presence of magic	Hard

Athletics	DC
Climb a ladder	0
Climb a rope	10
Climb an uneven surface (cave wall)	15
Climb a rough surface (brick wall)	20
Climb a slippery surface	+5
Climb an unusually smooth surface	+5
Catch hold while falling	+5
High jump 1 foot	10
+1 foot for every 10 additional points of the check result	
Long jump 1 square	10
+1 square for every 10 additional points of the check result	
Swim in calm water	10
Swim in rough water	15
Swim in stormy water	20

Bluff	DC
Deceive a creature	Creature's passive Insight
Gain combat advantage by feinting	Target's passive Insight
Hide from a creature	Creature's passive Insight

Dungeoneering or Nature	DC
Find food and water for 1 person	15
Find food and water for 5 people	25

Heal	DC
Grant second wind	10
Grant a saving throw	15
Stabilize the dying	15

Insight	DC
Sense motives or attitudes	Moderate
Sense outside influence	Hard

Perception	DC
Hear the noise of a battle	0
Hear normal conversation	Easy
Hear whispers	Hard
Listen through a door	+5
Listen through a wall	+10
Hear a noise more than 10 squares away	+2
Spot something barely hidden	Easy
Spot something well hidden	Hard
Spot something more than 10 squares away	+2
Find tracks in soft ground (snow, loose dirt, mud)	Moderate
Find tracks in hard ground (wood or stone)	Hard
Rain or snow since tracks were made	+10
Each day since tracks were made	+2
Quarry obscured its tracks	+5
Huge or larger creature	-5
Group of ten or more	-5

Streetwise	DC
Gather rumors and information:	
In a familiar settlement	Easy
In an unfamiliar but typical settlement	Moderate
In an alien settlement	Hard
Information is secret or closely guarded	+10

Thievery	DC
Disable trap	Hard (trap level)
Open lock	Hard
Pick pocket	Hard (target level)
Sleight of hand	Onlookers' passive Perception



STANDARD ACTIONS

Action	Description
Administer a potion	Help an unconscious creature consume a potion
Aid another	Improve an ally's skill check or ability check
Aid attack	Improve an ally's attack roll
Aid defense	Improve an ally's defenses
Basic attack	Make a basic attack
Bull rush	Push a target 1 square and shift into the vacated space
Charge	Move and then make a melee basic attack or a bull rush
Coup de grace	Make a critical hit against a helpless enemy
Equip or stow a shield	Use a shield or put it away
Grab	Seize and hold an enemy
Ready an action	Ready an action to perform when a specified trigger occurs
Second wind	Spend a healing surge and gain a bonus to defenses (once per encounter)
Total defense	Gain a +2 bonus to all defenses until next turn

MOVE ACTIONS

Action	Description
Crawl	While prone, move up to half speed
Escape	Escape a grab and shift 1 square
Run	Move up to speed + 2; grant combat advantage until next turn and take a -5 penalty to attack rolls
Stand up	Stand up from prone
Shift	Move 1 square without provoking opportunity attacks
Squeeze	Reduce size by one category, move up to half speed, and grant combat advantage
Walk	Move up to walking speed

MINOR ACTIONS

Action	Description
Draw or sheathe a weapon	Use or put away a weapon
Drink a potion	Consume a potion
Drop prone	Drop down to lie on the ground
Load a crossbow	Load a bolt into a crossbow to fire it
Open or close a door	Open or close a door or container that isn't locked or stuck
Pick up an item	Pick up an object in one's space or in an unoccupied square within reach
Retrieve or stow an item	Retrieve or stow an item on self

IMMEDIATE ACTION

Action	Description
Readied action	Take readied action when its trigger occurs

OPPORTUNITY ACTION

Action	Description
Opportunity attack	Make a melee basic attack against an enemy that provokes an opportunity attack

FREE ACTIONS

Action	Description
Delay	Put off a turn until later in the initiative order
Drop held items	Drop any items currently held in one's space or in an unoccupied square within reach
End a grab	Let go of an enemy
Spend an action point	Spend an action point to take an extra action (once per encounter, not in a surprise round)
Talk	Speak a few sentences

Cover

- ◆ **Partial Cover (-2 Penalty to Attack Rolls):** An attacker takes a -2 penalty to attack rolls against a target that has partial cover (sometimes simply called "cover"). The target is around a corner or protected by terrain. For example, the target might be in the same square as a small tree, obscured by a small pillar or a large piece of furniture, or behind a low wall.
- ◆ **Superior Cover (-5 Penalty to Attack Rolls):** An attacker takes a -5 penalty to attack rolls against a target that has superior cover. The target is protected by a significant terrain advantage, such as when fighting from behind a window, a portcullis, a grate, or an arrow slit.
- ◆ **Area Attacks and Close Attacks:** When an attacker uses an area attack power or a close attack power, a target has cover only if there is an obstruction between the origin square and the target.
- ◆ **Creatures and Cover:** When a creature makes a ranged attack against an enemy target and other enemies are in the way, the target has partial cover. A creature's allies never grant cover to the creature's enemies, and neither allies nor enemies grant cover against melee, close, or area attacks.
- ◆ **Reach:** If a creature that has reach attacks through terrain that would grant cover if the target were in it, the target has cover. For example, even if a target isn't in the same square as a small pillar, the target has cover from the melee attack of an ogre on the other side of the pillar.
- ◆ **Determining Cover:** To determine if a target has cover, choose a corner of a square the attacker occupies, or a corner of the attack's origin square, and trace imaginary lines from that corner to every corner of any one square that the target occupies. If one or two of those lines are blocked by an obstacle or an enemy, the target has partial cover. A line isn't blocked if it runs along the edge of an obstacle's or an enemy's square. If three or four of those lines are blocked yet line of effect remains—as when a target is behind an arrow slit—the target has superior cover.

Concealment

- ◆ **Partial Concealment (-2 Penalty to Attack Rolls):** An attacker takes a -2 penalty to melee and ranged attack rolls against a target that has partial concealment (sometimes simply called "concealment"). The target is in a lightly obscured square or in a heavily obscured square but adjacent to the attacker.
- ◆ **Total Concealment (-5 Penalty to Attack Rolls):** An attacker takes a -5 penalty to melee and ranged attack rolls against a target that has total concealment. The attacker can't see the target. The target is invisible, in a totally obscured square, or in a heavily obscured square and not adjacent to the attacker.

EXPERIENCE POINT REWARDS

Threat Level	XP Value	Threat Level	XP Value	Threat Level	XP Value
1	100	11	600	21	3,200
2	125	12	700	22	4,150
3	150	13	800	23	5,100
4	175	14	1,000	24	6,050
5	200	15	1,200	25	7,000
6	250	16	1,400	26	9,000
7	300	17	1,600	27	11,000
8	350	18	2,000	28	13,000
9	400	19	2,400	29	15,000
10	500	20	2,800	30	19,000

To calculate the target XP for an encounter of a given level or to calculate the appropriate major quest XP reward for a given level, multiply the XP value shown on the table by the number of player characters in the party.

ATTACK ROLL MODIFIERS

Circumstance	Modifier
Combat advantage against target	+2
Attacker is prone	-2
Attacker is restrained	-2
Target has partial cover	-2
Target has superior cover	-5
Target has partial concealment (melee and ranged only)	-2
Target has total concealment (melee and ranged only)	-5
Long range (weapon attacks only)	-2
Charge attack (melee only)	+1

BASE EXPLORATION SPEED

Speed	Per Day	Per Hour	Per Minute
5	25 miles	2½ miles	250 ft.
6	30 miles	3 miles	300 ft.
7	35 miles	3½ miles	350 ft.
8	40 miles	4 miles	400 ft.

TERRAIN AND TRAVEL

Distance Multiplier	Terrain
× ½	Mostly difficult terrain (dense forests, mountains, deep swamps, rubble-choked ruins)
× ¾	Extensive difficult terrain (forests, hills, swamps, crumbling ruins, caves, city streets)
× 1	Very little difficult terrain (open fields, plains, roads, clear dungeon corridors)

DAMAGE BY LEVEL

Character Level	Single Target	Two or More Targets
1	1d8 + 4	1d6 + 3
2	1d8 + 5	1d6 + 4
3	1d8 + 6	1d6 + 5
4	2d6 + 5	1d8 + 5
5	2d6 + 6	1d8 + 6
6	2d6 + 7	1d8 + 6
7	2d8 + 6	2d6 + 4
8	2d8 + 7	2d6 + 5
9	2d8 + 8	2d6 + 6
10	2d8 + 9	2d6 + 6
11	3d6 + 9	2d6 + 7
12	3d6 + 10	2d8 + 6
13	3d6 + 11	2d8 + 7
14	3d6 + 12	2d8 + 7
15	3d6 + 13	2d8 + 8
16	3d8 + 11	3d6 + 8
17	3d8 + 12	3d6 + 9
18	3d8 + 13	3d6 + 9
19	3d8 + 14	3d6 + 10
20	3d8 + 15	3d6 + 11
21	4d6 + 15	3d8 + 9
22	4d6 + 16	3d8 + 9
23	4d6 + 17	3d8 + 10
24	4d6 + 18	3d8 + 11
25	4d6 + 19	3d8 + 12
26	4d8 + 16	4d6 + 11
27	4d8 + 17	4d6 + 12
28	4d8 + 18	4d6 + 13
29	4d8 + 19	4d6 + 14
30	4d8 + 20	4d6 + 15

Use this table to set damage for an effect not covered in the rules—a character stumbles into a campfire or falls into a vat of acid, for example.

FOOD, DRINK, AND LODGING

Item	Price
Meal, common	2 sp
Meal, feast	5 gp
Ale, pitcher	2 sp
Wine, bottle	5 gp
Typical room (per day)	5 sp
Luxury room (per day)	2 gp

LIGHT SOURCES

Source	Radius	Brightness	Duration
Candle	2	Dim	1 hour
Torch	5	Bright	1 hour
Lantern	10	Bright	8 hours/pint
Campfire	10	Bright	8 hours
Sunrod	20	Bright	4 hours
Phosphorescent fungi	10	Dim	Ongoing

MONSTER KNOWLEDGE DCS

Monster Knowledge	DC
Name, type, and keywords	Moderate (monster level)
Powers, resistances, and vulnerabilities	Hard (monster level)

KNOWLEDGE SKILLS BY ORIGIN

Origin or Keyword	Skill
Aberrant origin	Dungeoneering
Construct keyword	Arcana
Elemental origin	Arcana
Fey origin	Arcana
Immortal origin	Religion
Natural origin	Nature
Shadow origin	Arcana
Undead keyword	Religion

DCS TO BREAK OR BURST COMMON ITEMS

Strength Check to:	Break DC	Target Level
Break down wooden door	13	1-5
Break down reinforced door	16	6-10
Break down barred door	20	11-15
Break down iron door	23	16-20
Break down adamantine door	27	21-25
Break through force portal	30	26-30
Force open wooden portcullis	21	6-10
Force open iron portcullis	28	16-20
Force open adamantine portcullis	32	26-30
Burst rope bonds	21	6-10
Burst iron chains	28	16-20
Burst adamantine chains	35	26-30
Smash wooden chest	16	6-10
Smash iron box	23	16-20
Smash adamantine box	30	26-30

DUNGEONS & DRAGONS[®]



REAVERS OF HARKENWOLD™

PART 1: THE IRON CIRCLE

Roleplaying Game Adventure Book 1

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INTRODUCTION

Reavers of Harkenwold™ is a two-part DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® adventure set in the Nentir Vale, a region introduced in the *DUNGEONS & DRAGONS Fantasy Roleplaying Game*. The first half of the adventure takes the characters from 2nd to 3rd level and is presented in this book. *Reavers of Harkenwold Part 2: The Die Is Cast* contains the second half of the adventure, which is designed to take characters from 3rd to 4th level.

Reavers of Harkenwold pits the heroes against the Iron Circle, a company of cruel mercenaries that has seized control of the small land of Harkenwold. In this adventure, the heroes become daring rebels and lead the folk of Harkenwold against their oppressors.

Harkenwold is a small barony in the southeast reach of the Nentir Vale. Several tiny hamlets and a number of steadings (isolated farms) are scattered across the broad dale of the White River. The great Harken Forest surrounds the realm, isolating it from the lands nearby. In better times, this quiet backwater contently avoids major trouble.

At present, Iron Circle mercenaries are plundering the land. Baron Stockmer, the rightful lord, is a prisoner in his own keep, and a villainous lord named Nazin Redthorn rules in his place. The Harkenwold folk are down to their last hope—that brave heroes will answer their calls for help and break the Iron Circle.

Adventure Background

Lord Vhennyk and his mysterious Iron Circle mercenaries came to the Nentir Vale from the southern city of Sarthel roughly two months ago. Their mission: Bring the Nentir Vale to heel. Vhennyk decided that overt operations would start in the relatively isolated Barony of Harkenwold, a collection of hamlets scattered over fifty miles of the upper White River valley. He tasked his subordinate, a brigand captain named Nazin Redthorn, with seizing the region, then hurried on to implement his other plans for the Vale.

About six weeks ago, Nazin led a large band of Iron Circle mercenaries into Harkenwold in a surprise attack. The brigands stormed Harken Keep and took Baron Stockmer captive. Iron Circle sweeps and raids soon quelled any show of resistance, leaving Harkenwold a conquered land.

The new bandit “authorities” are pillaging Harkenwold through “tolls” and confiscations, harshly punishing anyone who resists. Nazin is further strengthening his hold by negotiating with other malignant forces. In particular, he’s used some of the loot he’s plundering from Harkenwold’s suffering populace to buy the friendship of a group of odious bullywugs (a race of bipedal frog people).

ADVENTURE SYNOPSIS

The adventurers have a truly heroic challenge ahead of them: the liberation of an oppressed land.

Reavers of Harkenwold is split into two parts, each part contained within its own 32-page adventure book. Although the story's outcome hinges on the actions of the player characters, the adventure will likely unfold as follows.

Part 1: The Iron Circle

On the outskirts of Harkenwold, the adventurers encounter a band of Iron Circle marauders threatening a farmhouse. They intervene and rescue the widow Ilyana and her sons (encounter E1). Ilyana tells the heroes about Harkenwold's troubles and begs them to help end this evil. She directs the heroes to the nearby village of Albridge and two key figures in Harkenwold's growing resistance: a retired adventurer named Dar Gremath and the druid Reithann.

Dar Gremath is keen to deal with isolated Iron Circle detachments. He suggests certain targets, among them a supply caravan (encounters E2 and E3). For her part, Reithann advises the heroes to strike at the Toadwallow Caverns, the lair of a bullywug tribe allied to the Iron Circle (encounters T1 through T3). If the heroes defeat the bullywugs, the rebels in western Harkenwold are free to bring the fight to the Iron Circle. Regardless of which option they pick, the adventurers can return to the other quest whenever they want.

Cleaning out the Toadwallow or raiding the Iron Circle brings the adventurers to Nazin Redthorn's attention and convinces him that they are a serious threat. He dispatches strong patrols to hunt them down (encounter E4). The defeat of one of these strike forces emboldens freedom fighters throughout the region.

Heartened by the adventurers' aid, the people of Harkenwold prepare for battle against the invaders. The leaders of the resistance ask the heroes to contact the Woodsingers, a clan of elves living in the Harken Forest south of Harkenwold (encounter D1). To gain the aid of the elves, the adventurers must defeat the evil lurking in the wizard sanctuary of Dal Nystiere (encounters D2 through D4). Accomplishing the quest concludes this part of the adventure.

Part 2: The Die Is Cast

Returning from the forest with Woodsinger warriors as allies, the adventurers learn that Nazin Redthorn is marching to destroy the resistance. In the Battle of Albridge (encounters B1 through B4), the heroes lead the Harkenwolders and their elven allies against the Iron Circle. With hard fighting and some luck, the Iron Circle is defeated, and the surviving mercenaries retreat to Iron Keep—a stronghold too well fortified for the Harkenwolders to storm.

In the climactic challenge of the adventure, the heroes infiltrate Iron Keep (encounters K1 through K7). With fortune on their side, they strive to free Baron Stockmer, defeat the remaining Iron Circle soldiers, and kill or capture Nazin Redthorn. Their heroic efforts bring freedom to Harkenwold once again!

USING THIS ADVENTURE

Reavers of Harkenwold can be played as a follow-up to "The Twisting Halls" adventure presented in the *DUNGEONS & DRAGONS Fantasy Roleplaying Game*. The player characters should be 2nd level when they start this adventure and at least 4th level by its conclusion.

The adventure has the following components:

Reavers of Harkenwold Part 1: The Iron Circle (this book) provides an overview of Harkenwold and encounters that pit the heroes against the Iron Circle and its allies. The encounters are split into three major sections: Events (E), the Toadwallow Caverns (T), and the sanctuary at Dal Nystiere (D).

The second adventure book, *Reavers of Harkenwold Part 2: The Die Is Cast*, contains the second half of the adventure, with encounters divided into two major sections: the Battle of Albridge (B) and Iron Keep (K).

The adventure comes with two foldout battle maps depicting key encounter locations. The battle maps are designed for use with cardboard tokens or plastic miniatures, but they don't encompass every encounter in the adventure. For encounters that the battle maps don't cover, you can either draw the maps for your players using wet-erase markers and a blank battle map (available for purchase at your local hobby store), or you can build the maps using *D&D® Dungeon Tiles*.

Reavers of Harkenwold includes many villains and monsters, tokens for which can be found in this box or the *Monster Vault™* boxed set.

Getting Started

Read this book first, and familiarize yourself with the overall structure of the adventure. You won't need to look at the adventure book for *Reavers of Harkenwold Part 2: The Die Is Cast* until you're ready to run that part of the adventure. Review the adventure outline on the next several pages, particularly if you are a new DM.

See "Setting the Stage" (page 5) for ways to engage the characters in the story, or use them as examples to devise your own adventure hooks. Once everyone has gathered, start with encounter E1 (page 12).

FREEING HARKENWOLD

To successfully overthrow the Iron Circle and restore freedom to Harkenwold, the adventuring party must accomplish at least four of the following goals:

- ◆ Defeat the bullywugs of the Toadwallow Caverns.
- ◆ Forge an alliance with the Woodsinger elves.
- ◆ Win the Battle of Albridge.
- ◆ Rescue Baron Stockmer from Iron Keep.
- ◆ Defeat Nazin Redthorn, the leader of the Iron Circle in Harkenwold.

Achieving four of these goals ensures that the Harkenwolders eventually triumph over the Iron Circle. Achieving all five brings about an immediate victory. For example, losing the Battle of Albridge would be a serious setback for the Harkenwolders, but the remaining villages can beat the Iron Circle if Nazin Redthorn is dead, the Baron is freed, the Woodsinger elves are on their side, and the bullywugs pose no threat.

Running the Adventure

Guiding the players through such an involved plot can seem daunting at first, but don't despair. The adventure breaks down into five distinct chapters. Your players have a great deal of latitude to decide which specific tasks their characters are going to tackle next. All you have to do is offer them the decision points, and run the challenges and encounters associated with the course they choose. The storyline follows this general course:

Reavers of Harkenwold, Part 1: The Iron Circle

- ◆ Chapter I: Road to Adventure (encounters E1-E3)
- ◆ Chapter II: Opening Salvos (encounters T1-T3, E4)
- ◆ Chapter III: Gathering Allies (encounters D1-D4)

Reavers of Harkenwold, Part 2: The Die Is Cast

- ◆ Chapter IV: Battle of Albridge (encounters B1-B4)
- ◆ Chapter V: Iron Keep (encounters K1-K7, E5)

Chapter I. Road to Adventure The adventure begins with encounter E1 (page 12).

The adventurers confront a gang of Iron Circle marauders and stop them from burning down a farm. When they've defeated or driven off the villains, they meet Ilyana, their first contact in Harkenwold. Ilyana advises the party to continue on to the nearby village of Albridge and seek out the rebel leader Dar Gremath or the druid Reithann.

Dar Gremath: The rebel leader asks the heroes to begin direct action against the Iron Circle.

Reithann: The druid asks the heroes to go to the west end of the vale and deal with the vicious bullywugs lairing in the Toadwallow Caverns.

Chapter II. Opening Salvos The heroes decide to take on the bullywugs or oppose the Iron Circle.

Iron Circle: If the heroes choose to take on the Iron Circle directly, Dar Gremath suggests several different opportunities for causing mischief. The heroes can root out Iron Circle soldiers troubling a local village, or they can waylay an Iron Circle supply wagon (encounters E2 and E3, pages 14-17). Most of these events take place within a day's travel of Albridge, the heart of the rebellion.

Quest XP: Taking out the supply wagon earns a minor quest reward of 100 XP.

Bullywugs: If the heroes take on the bullywugs, they travel to Tor's Hold and the Toadwallow Caverns at the west end of the vale. The caverns are described in encounters T1 through T3 (pages 20-25).

Quest XP: Defeating the bullywug chieftain earns a minor quest reward of 125 XP.

Making Enemies: Defeating the bullywugs or taking out the supply wagon provokes a response from the Iron Circle. This leads to encounter E4 (page 18).

Chapter III. Gathering Allies Now that battle is truly joined between the adventurers and the Iron Circle, a workable plan for defeating the marauders must be devised. Both Reithann and Dar Gremath suggest contacting the Woodsinger elf clan in the Harken Forest and asking for their help against the Iron Circle. Winning the friendship of the Woodsingers isn't easy. The heroes must battle the evil undead mage lurking in the sanctuary of Dal Nystiere to prove their mettle to the elves. This quest leads to encounters D1 through D4 (pages 26-31).

Quest XP: Forging an alliance with the Woodsinger elves earns a minor quest reward of 150 XP.

The heroes might first choose to revisit the option they didn't take previously, dealing with the Toadwallow bullywugs or fighting Iron Circle soldiers where they find them.

Chapter IV. Battle of Albridge When the heroes return from their elven adventures, they find the barony abuzz with news: Nazin Redthorn is gathering Iron Circle soldiers to march on Albridge. Dar Gremath is organizing a force of Harkenwold militia for defense. At the start of encounter B1 (*Reavers of Harkenwold Part 2: The Die Is Cast*, page 3), a messenger from Dar Gremath asks the adventurers to come to Albridge as quickly as possible to help fight off the Iron Circle.

The player characters travel to Albridge, possibly with Tor's Hold or Woodsinger reinforcements, just in time to participate in Dar Gremath's council of war. The battle unfolds in the course of encounters B2 through B4 (*Reavers of Harkenwold Part 2: The Die Is Cast*, pages 6-11).

The battle turns on the heroes' successes up to this point in the adventure. If the heroes have been reasonably successful so far, the rebels break the Iron Circle army and win the day.



Yisarn the Skeletal Mage

Quest XP: Defeating the Iron Circle in the battle earns the characters a major quest reward of 750 XP.

Victory or Defeat: Whether the rebels triumph or not, a significant obstacle remains—Nazin Redthorn still holds Iron Keep. Harkenwold cannot be truly free as long as its principle fortress is in enemy hands.

Chapter V. Iron Keep Whether victorious or defeated, the surviving Iron Circle soldiers retreat to Iron Keep and hole up, hoping for reinforcements. Defeating Nazin Redthorn and his marauders means that Iron Keep must fall. The Harkenwold rebels have no chance of storming the battlements. A small team of highly capable and skilled volunteers, however, could infiltrate the castle, rescue the baron, and put an end to Nazin Redthorn. The heroes' assault on Iron Keep is covered in encounters K1 through K7 (*Reavers of Harkenwold Part 2: The Die Is Cast*, pages 16–30).

Quest XP: Driving the Iron Circle out of Harkenwold and freeing Baron Stockmer earns the adventurers a major quest reward of 1,000 XP.

Conclusion: If the heroes succeed in freeing Baron Stockmer and defeat Redthorn and the remaining Iron Circle reavers, the adventure comes to an end. The

heroes have liberated Harkenwold, and they can go on to whatever challenge awaits them next. If you wish to use the Iron Circle as an ongoing threat in your campaign, encounter E5 provides a fitting epilogue.

SETTING THE STAGE

Use one or a combination of the hooks below to motivate the characters to participate in this adventure.

Agents Provocateur: The characters are native to the town of Fallcrest, a few days west of Harkenwold. Lord Warden Markelhay, ruler of Fallcrest, hears that mercenaries have taken over Harkenwold and decides to send Baron Stockmer help. He summons the heroes to his keep and commissions them to go to Harkenwold, work to defeat the Iron Circle, and restore the baron to his throne.

Bandit Hunting: The heroes are on the trail of a gang of marauders who attacked a farmhouse a few days' travel away. The trail ends in northern Harkenwold, where it becomes clear that these bandits are not merely isolated raiders.

Interrupted Pilgrimage: One or more of the heroes are returning from a pilgrimage to a temple in the town of Fallcrest. A divine character whose patron is Erathis, Pelor, or Sehanine works best for this, but devotees of Ioun, Kord, Bahamut, Corellon, Avandra, or Moradin fit as well. Following the King's Road east after their visit, the adventurers pass into Harkenwold.

Trouble at Home: One or more of the adventurers are native to Harkenwold. While visiting the dwarven town of Hammerfast, several days' journey to the north, they learn from traveling merchants that brigands have taken over Harkenwold. They must hurry back home if they plan to do something about it.

EXTRA CREDIT

The players might “miss” aspects of the adventure by choosing to do other things. For example, if they decide to deal with the Toadwallow bullywugs first and then head for the Woodsinger elves, they'll skip over encounters E2 and E3. Not a problem. The adventure is designed to give real importance to the players' decisions about the task of freeing Harkenwold.

Your players might devise other ideas for helping Harkenwold. For example, they could visit different villages and train the militia, inspire more townsfolk to take up arms, or waylay numerous Iron Circle patrols. You can repurpose some of the specific encounters in this book to handle these fights. Alternatively, feel free to create suitable skill challenges covering these tasks.

Eventually, the party should arrive at the Battle of Albridge, the pivotal point of the adventure. You might need to create new victory point goals if the players have concentrated their efforts on things not discussed in detail here.

HARKENWOLD

The Barony of Harkenwold is a broad valley just over 50 miles long and roughly 20 miles wide located between arms of the Harken Forest. This primarily open land consists of gently rolling hills covered in a mix of cheery meadows, light forest with little undergrowth, and the occasional thicket. The climate is cool and rainy. Many small streams wind their way across the land, eventually joining the White River. These brooks are at most a few feet wide, and small footbridges cross them regularly.

Harkenwold's total population is about 2,000, scattered across half a dozen small hamlets and a score of isolated steadings. Most of the citizens are humans (50%), halflings (25%), and dwarves (20%), with a smattering of other folk (5%). Unless otherwise specified, NPCs the characters meet are human.

Harkenwolders living in the countryside are primarily farmers, shepherds, or woodcutters. Denizens of the hamlets also include woodworkers, smiths, carters, brewers, cheese makers, and leatherworkers. The other villagers tend nearby fields or orchards.

Harkenwold's Steadings

A stading is a farm or homestead in Harkenwold's countryside. Each of these settlements features a strongly built house of fieldstone and timber, surrounded by

approximately 200 acres of pastureland and cropland. Some steadings have defensive palisades around the main house. A single extended family commonly lives in the house—two or three couples with their children, their older relations, and a few hired hands. Rarely do the total inhabitants of a stading exceed 20 people.

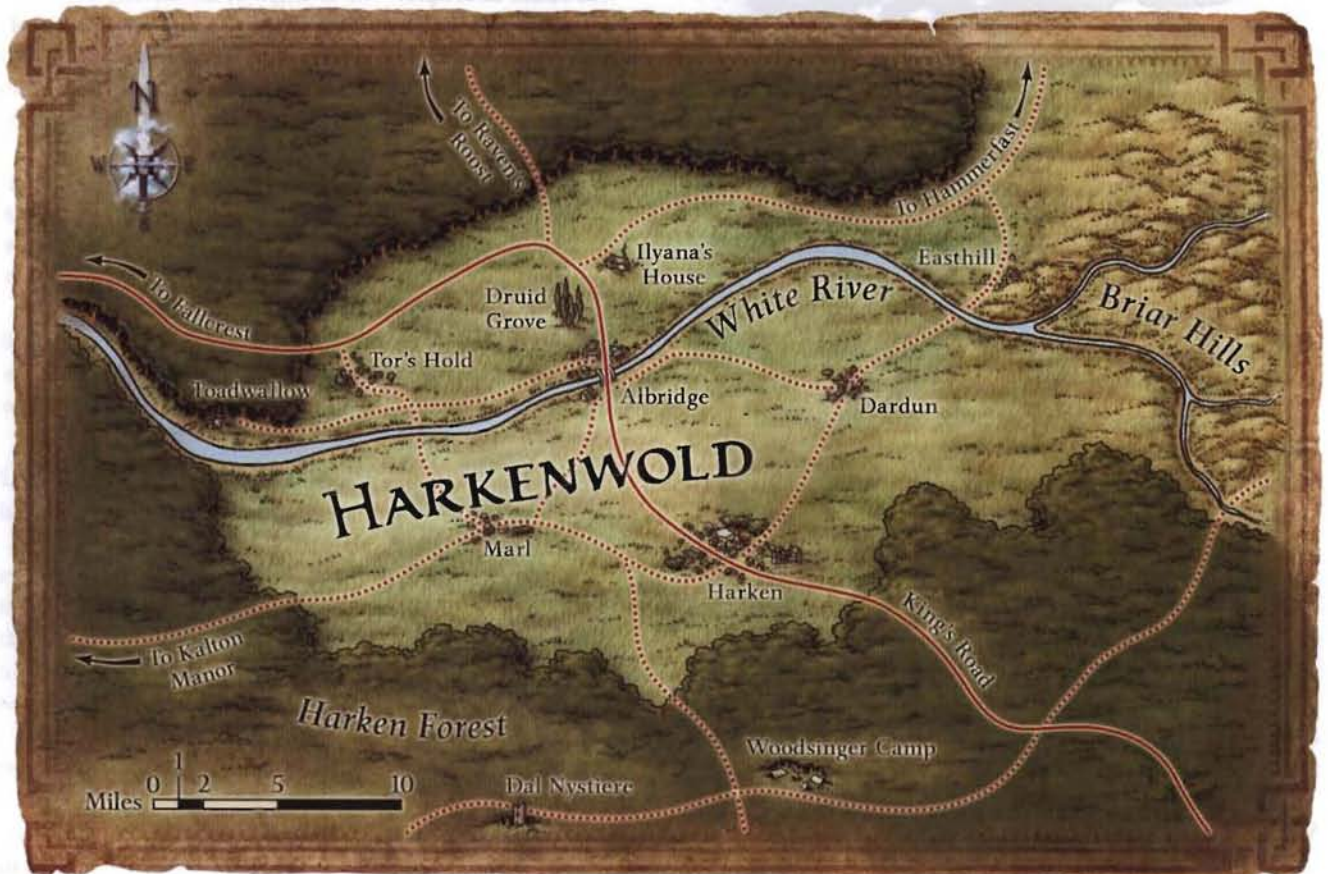
Traveling in Harkenwold

Characters on foot average 2½ to 3 miles per hour on roads or trails. Walking from Tor's Hold to Easthill, for example, takes about two days. If the adventurers avoid the well-traveled trails and strike out directly overland, the mixed terrain reduces their speed to three-quarters normal. Venturing into the Harken Forest or the Briar Hills is much more difficult. The rougher terrain reduces speed to half normal.

Travelers in Harkenwold are rarely more than a mile or two from the nearest stading. Most Harkenwolders are happy to put up visitors for the night, although the accommodations might be a dry barn or stable.

Sites of Interest

Places of note in Harkenwold are detailed in the following pages.



Albridge

Population 180

The second-largest village in Harkenwold, Albridge stands where the King's Road crosses the White River. The center of resistance to Iron Circle rule, the rebel leader in Albridge is Dar Gremath, a retired adventurer (see "Major Characters," page 10).

As the adventure begins, the rebels are gathering arms and armor, exchanging messages with disgruntled folk in other villages, and posting lookouts to report on Iron Circle movements in the countryside. Later, Albridge is the site of Nazin Redthorn's attempt to crush the Harkenwold rebels in a single battle, as detailed in encounters B1 through B4 (*Reavers of Harkenwold Part 2: The Die Is Cast*, pages 3-11).

Important locations in Albridge include:

1. Old Tower. This vine-covered ruin was once a post for soldiers guarding the bridge. The roof collapsed long ago, leaving the interior open to the weather, but the walls are still sound.

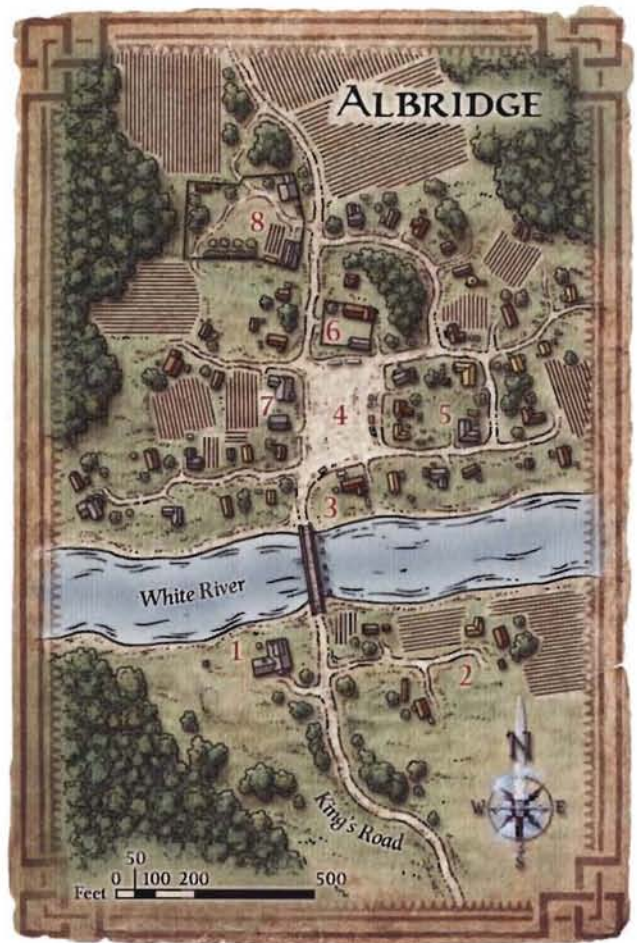
2. Erst the Wainwright. Erst is stout, middle-aged, and balding, well known as a human of few words. A crafter, he sells mostly to local farmers in need of carts, wagons, or wheelbarrows, as well as the rare merchant still making use of the old King's Road. Erst's grandfather was a smuggler—hidden tunnels under his workshop offer the rebels a good place to hide their arms and armor.

3. Gerrad's House. Gerrad, a hale and white-haired old halfling, is the village elder. He and his wife Nioma are skilled weavers and sell simple but well-constructed garments of all kinds. Gerrad was appointed village elder by Baron Stockmer 30 years ago, and he conducts most of the town business from the common room of the Mallard Inn. He hides the keenness of his mind behind an affable manner and long-winded stories. Gerrad is well aware of Dar Gremath's efforts to organize resistance and supports them. He hopes to deflect Iron Circle suspicions for as long as possible, but realizes that direct confrontation is inevitable. He despairs that the rebels will not be strong enough.

4. Village Green. This open space serves as a market in good weather. On most days, the children of the hamlet gather here to play. Merchant caravans use the green as a campsite if they're too big to fit in the Mallard's innyard.

5. Kathrid's Smithy. Kathrid is a black-haired, mature dwarf who served as a guard in the dwarven settlement of Hammerfast when she was younger. She is an industrious, can-do type who talks incessantly while she works, filling her listener's ears with advice on every topic imaginable. She is a close ally of Dar Gremath and serves as his chief lieutenant in the resistance. If anything happens to her commander, Kathrid is ready to step in and continue the fight.

6. The Mallard Inn. This small inn and taphouse is owned by Onneth, an older half-elf man nearing retirement. Onneth is a good-hearted soul, but he is fretful, forgetful, and incompetent. Most importantly, he can't



keep a secret, so the resistance leaders are careful about what they say around him. Room and board at the Mallard costs 5 silver pieces per night.

7. White River Mercantile. This trading post deals in locally produced woodwork, leather goods, provisions, and a handful of luxury items imported from Fallcrest or the lands to the south. It is run by Roma Featherton. She is a brisk, robust, officious halfling who recently took over the business from her ailing father. Her cousin Abel and his family help out. Most mundane equipment other than armor or weapons is available here for the normal cost.

8. Gremath Stables. Dar Gremath, an aging and retired human adventurer, rarely speaks about his long-ago travels. From this base in his livery and stable, Dar has organized the resistance in Harkenwold. Under cover of stabling their mounts, locals arrive and depart regularly, reporting Iron Circle movements and carrying messages to rebel leaders in other towns.

Dal Nystiere

The eladrin settlement of Dal Nystiere fell to ruin centuries ago, destroyed by some unknown threat, and the Harken Forest has all but swallowed up its remains. Strange witchlights and evil monsters are known to haunt the ruins, and the Woodsinger elves have learned to give the place a wide berth.

Hidden beneath a ring of standing stones on the outskirts of Dal Nystiere is a secret sanctuary used at one time by wizards as a place to conduct magical research. The heroes can win the gratitude (and allegiance) of the nearby Woodsinger elves by ridding the sanctuary of its monstrous inhabitants.

The sanctuary is now the domain of an undead mage named Yisarn who has ill plans for the Nentir Vale. Yisarn has joined forces with a group of Daggerburg goblins in an effort to expel the Woodsinger elves from the Harken Forest.

Meeting the Woodsinger elves and learning about the hidden sanctuary is handled in encounter D1 (page 26). The ring of stones and the sanctuary itself are described in encounters D2 through D4 (pages 27–31).

Dardun

Population 140

Surrounded by apple orchards, grain fields, and vineyards, Dardun is known for mild white wines, cheeses, and (of course) apples. Dardun's elder is a proud half-elf woman named Madera Lirr (see page 11), the matron of an old family of orchardists and cider-makers.

Dardun has been heavily oppressed by the Iron Circle. Raiders patrol the village streets and routinely tyrannize Dardun's residents.

Druid Grove

To the northwest of Albridge stands a large grove of ancient trees, long sundered from the Harken Forest proper. Locals call this place Druid Grove. A stone menhir stands in the clearing at the center of the grove.

The old human druid Reithann (see page 11) lives here in a moss-covered lodge near the menhir clearing, along with her apprentices Lorel (a halfling woman) and Theren (a young human man). Harkenwolders who venerate primal spirits come to this verdant place seeking Reithann's advice. Iron Circle marauders avoid the grove, fearing the wrath of spirits.

Easthill

Population 155

A hamlet of shepherds and stonecutters, Easthill rests on the slopes of the Briar Hills. The stone used to build the crossing at Albridge was quarried from hills nearby. A human trader named Sarken Toldorff is the village elder, but he is thoroughly cowed by the Iron Circle marauders. A hunter named Adalbar (see page 10) has quietly stepped up to organize Easthill's fight.

Harken Forest

The Harken Forest is much denser than the light woodlands scattered across Harkenwold, with larger trees and thicker undergrowth. It is also more dangerous for travelers—large and hungry beasts such as drakes and dire

wolves roam its shadows. Game trails or marked paths are few and far between. The Woodsinger elves, discussed in encounter D1 (page 26), live in the forested region south of Harkenwold.

Harken Village

Population 212 (town), 60 (keep)

Referred to as Harken by the locals, this village is the largest settlement in Harkenwold. Nazin Redthorn (see page 11) governs Harkenwold from Baron Stockmer's castle, which he's renamed Iron Keep.

Although Harken is the center of the Iron Circle's strength, the characters can visit without difficulty. The Iron Circle hasn't banned travelers from using the King's Road. Adventurers who represent themselves as "just passing through" and who are not belligerent or nervous can move about or stay overnight without being subject to harassment. Given the Iron Circle forces present, however, characters who act suspiciously or are openly hostile quickly attract a heavy-handed response.

Important locations of Harken include:

1. The Broken Gaol. Once a respected taphouse named the Silver Nail, this tavern has been adopted by the Iron Circle garrison as a favored off-hours drinking spot. An opportunistic half-orc woman named Krutha runs the place since the bandits chased off the Silver Nail's former owner. On most nights, a dozen or more Iron Circle ruffians gather here to drink and harass any travelers unwise enough to stop in.

2. Iron Keep. Formerly the castle of Baron Jonn Stockmer, Iron Keep now serves as the headquarters of Nazin Redthorn and the Iron Circle. About 60 Iron Circle soldiers are here at any given time (roughly 120 more patrol other parts of Harkenwold). Iron Keep is described in detail in *Reavers of Harkenwold Part 2: The Die Is Cast*, and the adventure concludes with the heroes' assault on the castle in encounters K1 through K7 (*Reavers of Harkenwold Part 2: The Die Is Cast*, pages 16–30).

3. Cliffside Brewery. The three Ironbeards—brothers Omurk and Dannurk, and Dannurk's notoriously short-tempered wife Dathilda—run this fine brewery. They argue constantly, but their disagreements never compromise the quality of their product. Their ales are sold as far away as Hammerfast and Fallcrest. They are good friends with the smithy Kathrid in Albridge and quietly sympathetic to the rebel cause.

4. Old Kellar's House. Once the elder of Harken, Kellar is an ancient dwarf who worked as a master stonecutter and mason for a century. He built much of Baron Stockmer's keep.

5. Grimbold's House. Grimbold and his family are shifters. They keep to themselves, making a living as woodcutters and trappers. Grimbold knows the woodlands around Harken quite well. He keeps his eyes open for folk on the run from the Iron Circle and helps them any way he can.

6. Tower of Green Flame. A mysterious crystal spire rising above the town, this tower is thought to be the residence of an ancient archmage who long ago departed the world to explore other planes. Townsfolk avoid the place for the most part, fearing arcane traps or curses. Of the few explorers brave enough to venture inside, more than one has disappeared and the rest found the place empty—three small, unfurnished floors with nothing but dust and bird nests. On moonless nights, eerie green phosphorescence plays about the tower's upper floors.

7. Harkenwold Trading Station. The major mercantile outlet in Harken, the Trading Station is owned by a stout, oily little man named Rennis. An informer for Nazin Redthorn, Rennis gathers rumors for his master as he travels about in so-called "trading ventures." Depending on his audience, the sneak readily claims to be spying on the Iron Circle for the rebel cause. Most mundane equipment is available for purchase in the Trading Station, and Rennis won't hesitate to warn Nazin about groups of competent-looking, heavily armed strangers loitering about town.

8. House of Faith. A large temple built by an adventuring cleric of yore, the House of Faith has seen better days. Shrines dedicated to Pelor, Moradin, Erathis, and Sehanine stand inside. The current prelate is a kindly, middle-aged human woman named Sister Sondal. Nazin

Redthorn has levied a ruinous tax against the temple, which Sondal has little hope of paying.

9. Nonnie's Place. The doughty halfling Nonnie Farwhere runs a small inn with a kitchen and common room. "Aunt Nonnie" is something of a gossip and a busybody, but she minds her tongue around the Iron Circle soldiers. Nonnie charges 5 silver pieces a night for room and board.

Marl

Once a prosperous thorp surrounded by well-tilled fields, Marl has suffered heavily under the Iron Circle. Nazin Redthorn ordered it burned as a warning to the other villages. Creatures such as dire rats, drakes, and goblins skulk around the ruins.

A few of Marl's outlying farms are still inhabited. The nearest steading belongs to Curwen, a fretful old halfling. He and his wife Masie have taken in a dozen of Marl's refugees. The rest of Marl's folk have scattered to other steadings or taken refuge in Tor's Hold.

Toadwallow Caverns

Located beneath a forested hill overlooking fetid marshland, the Toadwallow Caverns are unpleasant and ill regarded. The caverns are named for the unusual number of large, deep-throated amphibians that lurk in the boggy land nearby.

The Toadwallow is currently occupied by the Mud-Hides, a tribe of bullywugs that moved into the area a few months ago. The chieftain Gloorpk struck a deal with the Iron Circle—as long as he follows Nazin Redthorn's orders, his clan is free to raid and plunder the western part of Harkenwold.

The Toadwallow Caverns are explored in encounters T1 through T3 (pages 20–25). The caverns share a few common characteristics:

Illumination: Glowing green moss grows throughout the caverns, providing dim light.

Pools and Streams: Most of the water features are shallow, ranging from 2 to 5 feet deep. Their rocky bottoms are covered with slippery mud, making them difficult terrain unless stated otherwise.

Walls and Floors: The walls are natural rock, uneven but slick (DC 20 Athletics check to climb). The floors are level rock covered by a few inches of sand, dry mud, or dirt from old river floods.

Tor's Hold

Population 141

Tor's Hold is a group of steadings belonging to the seven children of Tor Hammerfist. Old Tor has been dead for many years now, and his offspring have each raised small clans of their own. The elder of Tor's Hold is Bran Torsson (see page 10).

The trouble with the bullywugs in the Toadwallow Caverns requires the folk of Tor's Hold to spend most of their



time defending their lands. As a result, they can't come to the aid of the Harkenwold rebels.

White River

The White River runs the length of Harkenwold, varying from 200 to 300 feet wide, and up to 10 feet deep. Two ferries cross the waterway—one near Tor's Hold, the other close to Easthill. Both are flatboats large enough for a horse and wagon, secured by thick hawsers. No one tends the ferries; travelers must haul themselves across.

The White River is home to the Reedfoot halfling clan—six keelboats scattered up and down the watercourse, each home to a large and boisterous family. The Reedfoots are allies of Dar Gremath, and help the resistance by carrying messages and spies the length of the vale. The leader of the clan is Willet Reedfoot, an older, charmingly roguish fellow who earns a comfortable living storytelling in the villages close to the river.

Woodsinger Camp

Population 80

The elves of the Woodsinger clans live in the southeastern part of the Harken Forest. This nomadic tribe consists of a dozen bands, numbering near 200 in total. Each band shifts from camp to camp every few months. The campsite marked on the map is closest to Harkenwold. A wise, cautious elf woman named Eriyel leads the band currently residing there.

The Woodsingers are potential allies. Finding them and winning their trust is detailed in encounter D1 (page 26).

MAJOR CHARACTERS

Beating the Iron Circle takes more than a few heroes working in isolation. Several nonplayer characters (NPCs) hold vital clues and quests for the adventurers.

Adalbar the Hunter (Easthill)

A quiet trapper and hunter, Adalbar is a lean, sandy-haired fellow, 31 years of age. Easthill elder Sarken has no stomach for a fight against the Iron Circle. Adalbar has taken up the rebel's cause in his stead. The woodsman doesn't say much, but when he does, he speaks his mind and tells the truth—if that gets someone's dander up, so be it.

Adalbar is on good terms with the Woodsinger elves and thinks they might be willing to help. If the heroes haven't already been tasked with the mission, Adalbar suggests that the heroes try to win the Woodsingers' trust.

Bran Torsson (Tor's Hold)

Bran is the elder of Tor's Hold. He's a big, boisterous man of 60 years, the oldest son of Tor, the former adventurer who founded Tor's Hold. A stubborn and pugnacious

human, Bran is full of bluster and likely to go off on long, spluttering rants about "those stinking croakers" or "those Iron Circle devils." Unlike many blowhards, however, he's ready to back up his words; he's a man of quick and determined action in a pinch.

Bran is anxious to muster the fighting folk of the Tors-son clan and march to aid Dar Gremath in Albridge, but doesn't feel he can as long as the bullywugs in the Toadwallow Caverns threaten his family's homes and fields. If he has to, he'll lead an assault on the Toadwallow with his kin, but he readily accepts the adventurers' help against the bullywugs, reserving his troops for the fight against the Iron Circle.

Dar Gremath (Albridge)

A broad-shouldered, gray-haired man of 55 years, Dar Gremath is the primary leader of the growing rebellion. He lives in Albridge, but he's organized a network of runners and scouts to keep in touch with the elders of the other villages. He was an adventuring fighter in his youth, and he's not about to let a few brigands ruin his new home.

ROLEPLAYING DAR GREMATH

Dar talks fast, doesn't break for questions, and doesn't repeat himself—he expects to be listened to. He's confident and optimistic, like a football coach who thinks the heroes are his star players.

Greetings. "Haven't seen you around before. Adventurers, eh? I've had an adventure or two myself, a long time ago. Name's Dar Gremath."

Ilyana said we should talk to you. "She was right! Now listen up. If we're going to beat the Iron Circle, we've got to draw Redthorn out of his keep. We need to get him angry. There's a supply caravan heading out to Easthill tomorrow—you could rob it. Gods, just picking a fight with Iron Circle goons in any tavern in Harkenwold would be a good start!"

How big is the Iron Circle army? "Redthorn's got about two hundred mercenaries—a bunch in Harken, the rest scattered throughout the vale. When I call for the rebels to gather, we'll have a little less than that. We can take 'em, but we're going to have to work together."

Why don't we just storm Redthorn's keep? "Oho, you're bold ones! I'll be honest with you—I think you'd all get killed. Show me that you're as tough as you say, and maybe we can find a way to get you inside. But it'll be a lot easier to draw Redthorn out than to go in after him."

The druid said to fight the bullywugs. "Aye, that'd be a help too. We can use the Tor's Hold lads, and those croakers are causing 'em no end of trouble. If you deal with the Toadwallow bullywugs first, swing back around. I'll still have work for you!"

Dar Greinath believes that the only way to beat the Iron Circle is to bait Nazin Redthorn into marching out of his keep to fight a major battle. To convince Nazin that the rebellion must be crushed, he needs the adventurers to raid and harass Iron Circle supply lines and patrols throughout Harkenwold.

Madera Lirr (Dardun)

The elder of the hamlet of Dardun, Madera is a proud half-elf woman of 70 years whose family is one of the oldest and wealthiest in Harkenwold. She dislikes the idea of open resistance—she's afraid that Dardun might provoke the same kind of reprisal that ended the hamlet of Marl.

While Madera doesn't like the heroes and isn't a particularly warm person, she wants to see Harkenwold freed. Her father was a Woodsinger elf, and Madera thinks that Harkenwold's best hope is to convince the elf tribe to come to their aid. She informs the heroes that if they want to help, they should find the Woodsingers.

Nazin Redthorn (Harken)

Unless they're captured and taken to Iron Keep or succeed in some ruse, the adventurers aren't likely to meet Nazin Redthorn before the Battle of Albridge. Nazin is a massively muscled 35-year-old human, with a scalp shaved down to rusty red stubble and a brutish cunning that glints in his dark, intense eyes. Although he revels in violence, he is crafty and patient by nature.

Nazin's goal is to completely subdue Harkenwold for the Iron Circle. He is arrogant and overconfident, so he's willing to let the resistance gather. That way he can crush it all at once when it suits him.

ROLEPLAYING NAZIN

Nazin's voice drips with sarcasm. He never misses a chance to belittle or taunt the heroes. When angry, he flushes, his nostrils flare, eyes open wide, and his muscles tense.

Prepare to be defeated! "You're the 'mighty heroes' who've caused so much trouble? Forgive me if I laugh!"

Why bother Harkenwold? "This land cried out for strong rule and purpose. Its people were indolent, ungrateful. We came to rectify these faults."

Who sent you? Who do you serve? "I am a commander of the Iron Circle. You haven't heard of us? Heh. You'll know the Iron Circle soon enough. All the Nentir Vale will lie under our banner by year's end."

Old Kellar (Harken)

Formerly the village elder of Harken, Old Kellar is a dwarf past 170 years old. He knows enough to stay out Nazin Redthorn's way, but watches the Iron Circle carefully and does his best to pass information to Harkenwold's rebels.

Kellar is a master mason and stoneworker, and he built much of Baron Stockmer's keep. He knows about the secret passage leading inside (see *Reavers of Harkenwold Part 2: The Die Is Cast*, page 16). He'll tell the adventurers about the secret entrance—but only when he's sure that they're ready.

If the heroes have not yet gained the quests to clear out the Toadwallow Caverns or to make an alliance with the Woodsinger elves, Old Kellar gives them whichever one they're missing.

Reithann the Druid (Albridge)

Reithann lives in a humble cottage in the Druid's Grove. She's a spry 80-year-old human woman dressed in robes of brown and green, carrying a gnarled staff. Her two apprentices, Lorel and Theren, rarely stray from her side.

Reithann is firmly on the side of the rebels. She aids adventurers fighting the Iron Circle in any way she can. The old woman believes that the first blow should fall on the bullywugs of the Toadwallow Caverns. They are unnatural creatures, and by harassing the people of western Harkenwold, they're preventing Tor's Hold from joining Albridge in open resistance.

ROLEPLAYING REITHANN

Reithann speaks slowly, choosing her words with care. She gives advice couched in animal analogies, such as "The wise fox stays well ahead of the hounds," or "Don't startle your prey. On a cloudy day, the mouse doesn't see the hawk's shadow."

Greetings. "You are strangers in Harkenwold. I knew I smelled change on the wind. I am Reithann, keeper of this grove."

Ilyana said we should talk to you. "A wise suggestion. Harkenwold cannot vanquish the Iron Circle if it is divided. We cannot unite as long as the hamlet of Tor's Hold is menaced by the Toadwallow monsters. Help Tor's Hold by dealing with the menace, and you'll free up two score stout fighters."

What kind of monsters? "They're bullywugs—hateful, half-mad things—walking, talking toads the size of men. A tribe's moved into the Toadwallow Caverns, and the Iron Circle's left the western vale to them."

How do we find the Toadwallow Caverns? "Head west along the river-side trail from Albridge. It's ten miles to Tor's Hold, and another seven or eight to the Toadwallow—you can see the cave entrance from the trail."

ENCOUNTER E1: ILYANA'S PLIGHT

Encounter Level 2 (650 XP)

Setup

4 Iron Circle brigands (B)

2 gray wolves (W)

Ilyana, intrepid homesteader (I)

Fold the "Steading" battle map in half so that the half featured in this encounter is facing up. Place the brigands and wolves where indicated. The characters begin the encounter on the road near the map's edge.

Whether from Fallcrest, Hammerfast, or some other place, the characters enter Harkenwold from the north, roughly in the area of Ilyana's farm. Ideally, they are traveling the King's Road. If not, modify the readaloud text below as appropriate.

As the heroes travel, read:

You arrive in Harkenwold in the middle of the day. It's a broad, lightly settled valley between two arms of the Harken Forest. You haven't traveled more than a mile or two into the valley before trouble appears. Rounding a bend in the road, you spy a pillar of smoke climbing into the clear blue sky. The source, hidden by rolling hills, is roughly a mile along a dirt track that intersects the road.

The player characters should be interested in investigating. If they hesitate, tell the players that, at best, the smoke is curious; at worst, someone could be in trouble. If the characters ignore the smoke and proceed to Albridge, you must bring them to Reithann or Dar Gremath's attention by other means. Word of Ilyana and her sons' grisly deaths soon reaches the heroes' ears.

When the characters investigate, read:

You see human brigands and a pair of wolves surrounding a farmhouse. The humans all wear black cloaks with a gray ring device. They're preparing pitch-soaked torches, laughing and taunting whoever's inside. They've already burned a small outbuilding—the source of the smoke column.

The ruffians are focused on the farmhouse. Sneaking up on the brigands and wolves requires the characters to make a DC 17 Stealth check; if at least half of the characters succeed, the villains are surprised. If alerted, the brigands attempt to scare off the adventurers.

Read:

The wolves growl a warning, and the brigands face you. One of them scowls and waves his arm. "Move on, you!" he snarls. "This is Iron Circle business!"

From inside the farmhouse, you hear a woman's voice shout angrily. "Business? It looks like robbery and murder to me!"



The brigands attack if the adventurers ask questions or don't retreat immediately.

4 Iron Circle Brigands (B)

Medium natural humanoid, human

Level 1 Soldier

XP 100 each

HP 28; Bloodied 14

Initiative +3

AC 17, Fortitude 14, Reflex 13, Will 12

Perception +0

Speed 5

STANDARD ACTIONS

⚔ Scimitar (weapon) ♦ At-Will

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +6 vs. AC

Hit: 1d8 + 3 damage.

⚔ Drive Back (weapon) ♦ At-Will

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +6 vs. AC

Hit: 1d8 + 3 damage, the brigand pushes the target 1 square, and the brigand shifts into the square the target occupied.

↘ Crossbow (weapon) ♦ At-Will

Attack: Ranged 15/30 (one creature); +6 vs. AC

Hit: 1d8 + 1 damage.

TRIGGERED ACTIONS

⚔ Relentless Assault ♦ At-Will

Trigger: An enemy adjacent to the brigand makes an attack that doesn't include the brigand as a target.

Effect (Free Action): The triggering enemy takes 3 damage.

Str 16 (+3)

Dex 12 (+1)

Wis 10 (+0)

Con 12 (+1)

Int 9 (-1)

Cha 9 (-1)

Alignment evil

Languages Common

Equipment scale armor, light shield, scimitar, crossbow, 20 bolts, black cloak embroidered with a gray circle

2 Gray Wolves (W)		Level 2 Skirmisher
Medium natural beast		XP 125 each
HP 38; Bloodied 19	Initiative +6	
AC 16, Fortitude 14, Reflex 15, Will 13	Perception +7	
Speed 8	Low-light vision	
STANDARD ACTIONS		
Ⓛ Bite ♦ At-Will		
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +7 vs. AC		
Hit: 1d6 + 3 damage (or 2d6 + 3 against a prone target). If the wolf has combat advantage against the target, the target falls prone.		
Effect: The wolf shifts 4 squares.		
Str 13 (+2)	Dex 16 (+4)	Wis 13 (+2)
Con 14 (+3)	Int 2 (-3)	Cha 10 (+1)
Alignment unaligned	Languages –	

Tactics

The Iron Circle brigands are bullies who aren't expecting a tough fight. They move up to engage the adventurers at the first opportunity, and use *drive back* to force an adventurer into contact with more enemies.

The wolves are trained to flank enemies and drag them down. They attack any character the brigands are fighting. When only one brigand remains, he breaks off and tries to run for it. The wolves fight to the death.

Ilyana and her sons hide inside the farmhouse until the fight is over. The Iron Circle bandits ignore them.

Features of the Area

Illumination: Bright light—this encounter takes place during daylight.

Burned Outbuilding: The thatch roof of this storage shed is burned away, and the walls are charred and weakened. Nonetheless, it's basically intact.

Farmhouse: The windows are shuttered, and the door is barred. Characters inside can fire missile weapons through loopholes in the shutters and door, gaining

improved cover against attacks from outside. Opening the door or windows requires a DC 18 Strength check.

Embankment: This steep, dirt road embankment is difficult terrain.

Tree: The square occupied by the tree's trunk is impassable but provides cover. Climbing the tree requires a DC 10 Athletics check, and a creature up the tree gains concealment.

Wall: The fieldstone wall stands 4 feet high and provides cover against attacks that cross it. It costs 2 squares of movement to cross the wall.

Well: This 15-foot-deep well is surrounded by a low stone wall (+2 bonus to the saving throw to catch yourself). Climbing out of the well is difficult (DC 20 Athletics check).

Roleplaying: Ilyana's Plea

When the adventurers defeat or drive off the Iron Circle attackers, Ilyana emerges from her house. The remainder of the encounter involves roleplaying.

You hear the rasping sound of a heavy bolt being drawn back, and the farmhouse door opens. A half-elf woman of middle years steps out. She's carrying a battered old crossbow. Two boys of fifteen or so follow after her. The woman looks around the farmyard, frowning at the bloodshed, and sighs.

"My thanks, strangers," she says. "Those Iron Circle jackals came to rob us. I barred my door, but they said they'd burn the house down with me and my boys in it. You saved our lives—but who are you?"

Conclusion

When the adventurers have no more questions for Ilyana, she suggests that the party rest up at her home, or press ahead to Albridge (page 7) and seek out Dar Gremath or Reithann (pages 10 and 11) for guidance.

ROLEPLAYING ILYANA

Ilyana knows most of the story laid out in the "Adventure Background" section (page 2), although she doesn't know anything about Lord Vhennyk—she thinks Nazin Redthorn is the leader of the Iron Circle. She's a tough, frontier woman, bowed but unbroken. Talking about the Iron Circle makes her mad enough to splutter and shake her finger.

Who are you? "My name is Ilyana, and these are my sons Jarek and Jarl. This is our farm. The reavers killed my husband Karthen when they invaded the dale. My boys and I have been trying to get by ever since."

Who attacked you? Who is the Iron Circle? "The Iron Circle is full of sellswords and cutthroats who seized Harkenwold over a month ago. They've got Baron Stockmer imprisoned in his own keep, and they've been plundering the land ever since. They say they're collecting taxes, but it's robbery, pure and simple."

How can we help? "The folk of Harkenwold are ready to rebel—we just need a spark to set things off. I think you should talk to old Reithann, the druid, or maybe Dar Gremath. They'll know what needs doing. Reithann lives in the Druid's Grove to the southwest; you can find Dar just down the road in Albridge. But go carefully."

Where should we go? "I would avoid Harken Village. There are too many Iron Circle soldiers there. But Albridge should be safe enough."

Why should we help? "Out of plain civil decency? If that won't do, I'd wager Baron Stockmer will richly reward you if you drive away the reavers and free him."

Good-bye. "Take care, strangers. My boys and me'll hide those who fell here. With luck, the Iron Circle won't learn what happened here or about you any time soon."

ENCOUNTER E2: TAVERN BRAWL

Encounter Level 1 (543 XP)

Setup

- 2 Iron Circle brigands (B)
- 2 Iron Circle cutthroats (C)
- 3 Iron Circle rabble (R)
- 5 Harkenwold bystanders (H)

This encounter uses the “Tavern” battle map. The players can place their characters along any edge of the map. Place the villains only when the characters can see them.

Run this encounter whenever the adventurers choose to seek out and confront some of the Iron Circle soldiers garrisoning one of the villages in Harkenwold. This encounter fits well when:

- ◆ The adventurers arrive in Albridge and decide to head for the Mallard Inn before speaking to one of the individuals Ilyana mentioned;
- ◆ The adventurers venture into Harken Village and stumble on Iron Circle soldiers in the Broken Gaol or the Cliffside Brewery;
- ◆ The adventurers seek out a place where Iron Circle soldiers gather together and are off their guard (possibly in Dardun or Easthill).

The rabble and brigands are seated and waiting for tankards of ale in the tavern proper. The cutthroats are rummaging through the taverner’s house and the stables, looking for something valuable enough to steal.

The villains aren’t expecting a fight. When the adventurers enter the tavern, they sit up and take note (any band of armed folk is suspicious). They immediately demand an explanation and order the adventurers to disarm themselves. They don’t attack until the adventurers become hostile or fail to comply with their demands. It’s possible that a smooth-tongued adventurer can convince the Iron Circle gang that they’re no threat, or that they’re allowed to be armed as they are. In that case, the Iron Circle soldiers return to harassing the Harkenwolders—roughing them up, robbing them, and so on—until the adventurers decide to do something about it.

When the adventurers enter the tavern, read:

This small tavern is occupied by a band of five human soldiers wearing black cloaks with a gray circle device. They are loudly harassing the taverner and the barmaid. Several other patrons—common Harkenwolders by their appearance—keep their heads down and try not to catch the soldiers’ notice.

“Now who the devil do you think you are?” one of the soldiers snarls when he sees you. “No one in this miserable town’s allowed to carry arms! Set ‘em down if you know what’s good for you!”

2 Iron Circle Brigands (B)		Level 1 Soldier
Medium natural humanoid, human		XP 100 each
HP 28; Bloodied 14		Initiative +3
AC 17, Fortitude 14, Reflex 13, Will 12		Perception +0
Speed 5		
STANDARD ACTIONS		
⚔ Scimitar (weapon) ◆ At-Will		
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +6 vs. AC		
Hit: 1d8 + 3 damage.		
⚔ Drive Back (weapon) ◆ At-Will		
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +6 vs. AC		
Hit: 1d8 + 3 damage, the brigand pushes the target 1 square, and the brigand shifts into the square the target occupied.		
⚔ Crossbow (weapon) ◆ At-Will		
Attack: Ranged 15/30 (one creature); +6 vs. AC		
Hit: 1d8 + 1 damage.		
TRIGGERED ACTIONS		
Relentless Assault ◆ At-Will		
Trigger: An enemy adjacent to the brigand makes an attack that doesn’t include the brigand as a target.		
Effect (Free Action): The triggering enemy takes 3 damage.		
Str 16 (+3)	Dex 12 (+1)	Wis 10 (+0)
Con 12 (+1)	Int 9 (-1)	Cha 9 (-1)
Alignment evil		Languages Common
Equipment scale armor, light shield, scimitar, crossbow, 20 bolts, black cloak embroidered with a gray circle		

2 Iron Circle Cutthroats (C)		Level 2 Skirmisher
Medium natural humanoid, human		XP 125 each
HP 37; Bloodied 18		Initiative +6
AC 16, Fortitude 12, Reflex 14, Will 12		Perception +1
Speed 6		
TRAITS		
Shadow Stride		
If the cutthroat moves at least 3 squares from its starting position on its turn, it gains concealment until the start of its next turn.		
STANDARD ACTIONS		
⚔ Short Sword (weapon) ◆ At-Will		
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +7 vs. AC		
Hit: 1d6 + 4 damage (or 2d6 + 4 if the cutthroat has combat advantage against the target).		
⚔ Hand Crossbow (weapon) ◆ At-Will		
Attack: Ranged 10/20 (one creature); +7 vs. AC		
Hit: 1d6 + 3 damage.		
MINOR ACTIONS		
⚔ Slasher’s Feint ◆ At-Will (1/round)		
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +5 vs. Reflex		
Hit: The cutthroat gains combat advantage against the target until the end of its current turn.		
Str 12 (+2)	Dex 17 (+4)	Wis 11 (+1)
Con 13 (+2)	Int 10 (+1)	Cha 12 (+2)
Alignment evil		Languages Common
Equipment leather armor, short sword, hand crossbow, 20 bolts, black cloak embroidered with a gray circle		

3 Iron Circle Rabble (R) **Level 2 Minion Brute**
Medium natural humanoid, human XP 31 each

HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion. Initiative +1
AC 16, Fortitude 15, Reflex 13, Will 13 Perception +1
Speed 6

TRAITS

Mob Rule
The rabble gains a +2 power bonus to all defenses while adjacent to two or more allies.

STANDARD ACTIONS

⚔ **Mace (weapon)** ♦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +7 vs. AC
Hit: 5 damage.

Str 14 (+3) Dex 10 (+1) Wis 10 (+1)
Con 12 (+2) Int 9 (+0) Cha 9 (+0)

Alignment evil Languages Common
Equipment mace, black cloak embroidered with a gray circle

5 Harkenwold Bystanders (H) **Level 1 Minion Brute**
Medium natural humanoid, human XP 0 each

HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion. Initiative +0
AC 15, Fortitude 13, Reflex 13, Will 13 Perception +0
Speed 6

Str 10 (+0) Dex 10 (+0) Wis 10 (+0)
Con 10 (+0) Int 11 (+0) Cha 8 (-1)

Alignment unaligned Languages Common

Tactics

The rabble and the brigands aren't expecting serious opposition. They rush the nearest adventurer and attack. Other than seeking to flank opponents, they fight with little coordination.

The cutthroats hear any fighting that breaks out in the tavern and move to the doorways of the house and the stable at the end of the first round of combat. They attack the party from the rear on the second round, flanking heroes when possible. They use *slasher's feint* to gain combat advantage against their targets.

The Harkenwolders aren't warriors. When fighting breaks out, they flee by the safest route possible, or cover in a corner if they can't get out without provoking an opportunity attack from the Iron Circle.

ALTERNATE SETUP

If the adventurers don't go looking for trouble, trouble might find them. You can initiate this encounter at any point when the characters are resting in a town. They're in the tavern when a gang of Iron Circle soldiers barges in. Have the players choose places to be seated in the tavern, and place the Iron Circle soldiers at the tavern door as they barge in ready for trouble.



ENCOUNTER E2: TAVERN BRAWL

Features of the Area

The tavern consists of a common room, the taverner's cottage, and a stable.

Illumination: Bright light during the day. At night, lanterns provide bright light indoors and dim light outdoors.

Bushes: These squares are difficult terrain and provide concealment to characters in or behind them.

Furnishings: The furniture is lightly built and offers no impediment to movement—a moving character simply kicks the furnishings aside. Furnishings can be used as improvised weapons. A bed or table flipped on its side (a standard action) becomes a low wall, providing cover against attacks crossing it.

Hearth: A creature pushed or slid into a hearth square takes 1d6 fire damage from a close brush with the fire.

Trees: Squares occupied by tree trunks are impassable but provide cover. Climbing a tree requires a DC 10 Athletics check, and a creature up a tree gains concealment.

ENCOUNTER E3: WAYLAY THE CARAVAN

Encounter Level 2 (700 XP)

Setup

- 1 Iron Circle dark adept (A)
- 4 Iron Circle brigands (B)
- 1 iron defender (I)
- 1 horse (H)

This encounter uses the “Standing Stones” battle map. Run this encounter when the adventurers decide to attack Iron Circle supply lines in Harkenwold. It fits best when:

- ◆ The adventurers take Dar Gremath’s suggestion for a good ambush opportunity;
- ◆ Another NPC (Adalbar in Easthill, Grimbold in Harken, or Madera Lirr in Dardun) suggests an attack against the Iron Circle’s supply wagons;
- ◆ The adventurers roam the countryside in search of Iron Circle activities to disrupt, and stumble across a supply wagon and guards.

No matter how the adventurers encounter the wagon, they have time to set up an ambush. Place the villains and monsters on the map, and allow the players to pick out their hiding places. As long as all of the characters have something to hide in or behind, they can attempt to surprise the villains. Have each hero make a DC 16 Stealth check; if at least half succeed, the party gains surprise against the villains.

After the adventurers set their ambush, read:

A large wagon pulled by a big cart horse creaks along the dusty road. Three Iron Circle soldiers in black cloaks with gray circles plod alongside, while a fourth drives the wagon. Another human in chainmail with a dark hood over his head sits near the driver. Unlike the soldiers, he wears a red surcoat, and his circle design is black trimmed in gold. Ahead of the wagon, a clockwork creature resembling a powerful hound made from iron plates and sharp spikes trots along the road, its red eyes glowing vigilantly.

Tactics

The brigand driver and the dark adept remain in the wagon. The driver uses his crossbow, and the dark adept relies on *fiery tendrils*. If the fight goes badly, the brigand or adept lashes the horse’s reins, inducing the animal to bolt (see below).

The brigands on foot melee with the heroes, but try to stay close the wagon. They don’t want to leave the range of the adept’s *dark imperative*. If they’re subjected to long-range attacks they can’t answer, the brigands move behind

Iron Circle Dark Adept (A) Level 3 Controller (Leader)	
Medium natural humanoid, human	XP 150
HP 46; Bloodied 23	Initiative +2
AC 17, Fortitude 14, Reflex 14, Will 16	Perception +5
Speed 6	
STANDARD ACTIONS	
⚔ Dark Dagger (fire, weapon) ◆ At-Will	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +6 vs. Reflex	
Hit: 2d4 + 4 fire damage, and the dark adept slides the target 3 squares.	
🔥 Fiery Tendrils (fire) ◆ At-Will	
Attack: Area burst 1 within 10 (creatures in burst); +6 vs. Reflex	
Hit: 1d6 + 6 fire damage, and the target is slowed and grants combat advantage until the end of the dark adept’s next turn.	
MINOR ACTIONS	
⬅ Dark Imperative (healing, necrotic) ◆ Recharge when bloodied	
Effect: Close burst 5 (one ally in burst). The dark adept slides the target 3 squares, and the target gains 10 temporary hit points. While the target has these temporary hit points, its melee attacks deal 3 extra necrotic damage.	
Skills Arcana +8, Religion +8	
Str 13 (+2)	Dex 12 (+2) Wis 18 (+5)
Con 14 (+3)	Int 15 (+3) Cha 13 (+2)
Alignment evil Languages Common	
Equipment chainmail, dagger, red surcoat with gold-trimmed black circle	

4 Iron Circle Brigands (B) Level 1 Soldier	
Medium natural humanoid, human	XP 100 each
HP 28; Bloodied 14	Initiative +3
AC 17, Fortitude 14, Reflex 13, Will 12	Perception +0
Speed 5	
STANDARD ACTIONS	
⚔ Scimitar (weapon) ◆ At-Will	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +6 vs. AC	
Hit: 1d8 + 3 damage.	
⚔ Drive Back (weapon) ◆ At-Will	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +6 vs. AC	
Hit: 1d8 + 3 damage, the brigand pushes the target 1 square, and the brigand shifts into the square the target occupied.	
🏹 Crossbow (weapon) ◆ At-Will	
Attack: Ranged 15/30 (one creature); +6 vs. AC	
Hit: 1d8 + 1 damage.	
TRIGGERED ACTIONS	
🔪 Relentless Assault ◆ At-Will	
Trigger: An enemy adjacent to the brigand makes an attack that doesn’t include the brigand as a target.	
Effect (Free Action): The triggering enemy takes 3 damage.	
Str 16 (+3)	Dex 12 (+1) Wis 10 (+0)
Con 12 (+1)	Int 9 (-1) Cha 9 (-1)
Alignment evil Languages Common	
Equipment scale armor, light shield, scimitar, crossbow, 20 bolts, black cloak embroidered with a gray circle	

the wagon and use it for cover. In that case, they return fire with their crossbows.

The iron defender is under orders to guard the dark adept, so it stays close to the wagon. If the dark adept gets out of the wagon for any reason, the iron defender moves next to him and sticks close by his side. Otherwise, it attacks any enemy approaching the wagon or attacking the dark adept with ranged attacks.

Iron Defender (I)		Level 3 Soldier	
Medium natural animate (construct, homunculus)		XP 150	
HP 47; Bloodied 23		Initiative +5	
AC 19, Fortitude 16, Reflex 15, Will 13		Perception +6	
Speed 6		Darkvision	
Immune disease, poison			
TRAITS			
Pursue and Attack			
When the iron defender makes an opportunity attack, it shifts 1 square before and after the attack.			
STANDARD ACTIONS			
⊕ Bite ♦ At-Will			
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +8 vs. AC			
Hit: 1d8 + 6 damage.			
TRIGGERED ACTIONS			
‡ Guard Creature ♦ At-Will			
Trigger: An adjacent enemy attacks a creature guarded by the iron defender.			
Attack (Immediate Reaction): The iron defender makes a melee basic attack against the triggering enemy.			
Str 16 (+4)	Dex 15 (+3)	Wis 11 (+1)	
Con 15 (+3)	Int 5 (-2)	Cha 8 (+0)	
Alignment unaligned Languages –			

Horse (H)		Level 1 Brute	
Large natural beast (mount)		XP 100	
HP 36; Bloodied 18		Initiative +1	
AC 15, Fortitude 15, Reflex 13, Will 10		Perception +5	
Speed 10		Low-light vision	
TRAITS			
Charger (mount)			
The horse grants its rider a +5 bonus to damage rolls on charge attacks.			
STANDARD ACTIONS			
⊕ Kick ♦ At-Will			
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +6 vs. AC			
Hit: 1d6 + 4 damage.			
‡ Trample ♦ At-Will			
Effect: The horse can move up to its speed and enter enemies' spaces. The movement provokes opportunity attacks, and the horse must end its move in an unoccupied space. When it enters an enemy's space, the horse makes a melee attack (+4 vs. Reflex). If the attack hits, the target takes 1d6 + 4 damage and falls prone.			
Str 19 (+4)	Dex 13 (+1)	Wis 11 (+0)	
Con 16 (+3)	Int 2 (-4)	Cha 9 (-1)	
Alignment unaligned Languages –			

The horse doesn't fight. If injured, it bolts, dragging the wagon 5 squares per move. The cart horse makes a saving throw each round it's bolting. When it succeeds, it comes to a halt.

Features of the Area

Illumination: Bright light during the day, dim light at night.

Boulders: Squares occupied by boulders are difficult terrain.

Bushes: These squares are difficult terrain and provide concealment to creatures in or behind them.

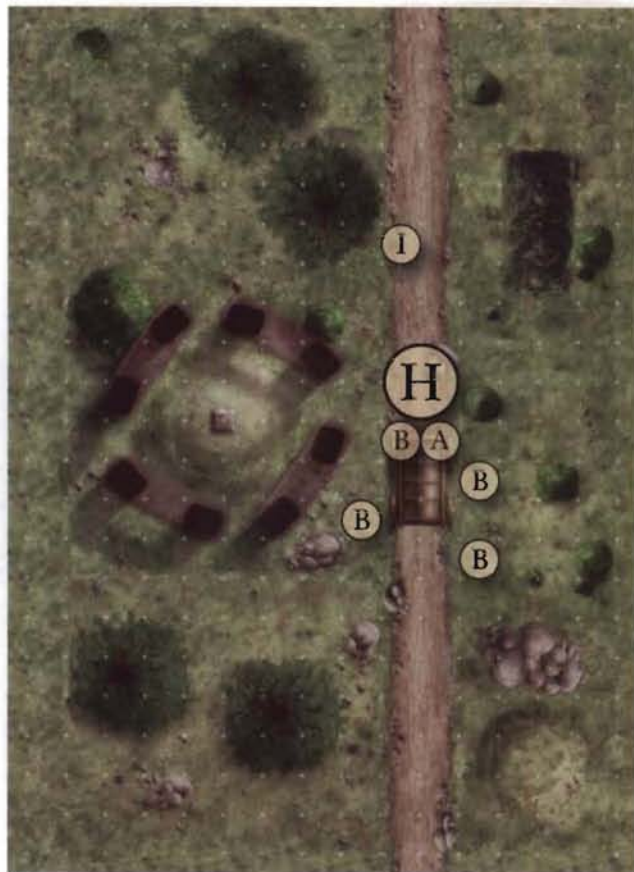
Ring of Standing Stones: The Nentir Vale is dotted with rings of standing stones left behind by ancient eladrin spellcasters. A cracked stone sundial stands in the center of the circle. Squares occupied by the standing stones are impassable, but a creature can stand on top of a stone. Each stone is 10 feet high and requires a DC 10 Athletics check to climb. Some residual magic lingers in the area, and any creature standing inside the circle gains a +2 bonus to damage rolls.

Trees: Squares occupied by tree trunks are impassable but provide cover. Climbing a tree requires a DC 10 Athletics check, and a creature up a tree gains concealment.

Wagon: Creatures in the wagon have cover against attacks from outside. Climbing into the wagon takes a move action; hopping down from the wagon costs 1 extra square of movement.

If the horse bolts, creatures that begin their turn on the wagon might fall. At the start of each turn, the creature attempts a DC 13 Acrobatics check. On a failure, it falls prone. If the creature fails by 5 or more, it stumbles out of the wagon, takes 1d6 damage, and falls prone on the ground adjacent to the wagon. Creatures in the wagon while the horse is bolting take a -2 penalty to attack rolls.

Treasure: A lockbox in the wagon holds 240 gp, a *potion of healing*, and a level 2 magic item. The dark adept carries the key to the lockbox; otherwise, it can be unlocked with a DC 15 Thievery check.



ENCOUNTER E4: HUNTED!

Encounter Level 3 (794 XP)

Setup

- 1 Iron Circle dark adept (A)
- 3 Iron Circle brigands (B)
- 4 Iron Circle rabble (R)
- 1 rage drake (D)

Run this encounter when the adventurers are traveling through Harkenwold to a new locale or village. It should occur a couple days after the heroes clean out the Toadwallow Caverns (encounters T1 through T3).

Weather plays a vital role in this encounter. In the hours leading up to the event, the overcast sky darkens and a light rain begins to fall. By the time the encounter unfolds, the rain has become heavy, and a chill fog enshrouds the land. See "Features of the Area" for the effects of this inclement weather.

Because the heroes have proven to be a significant threat to the Iron Circle by this time, Nazin Redthorn dispatches roving squads to run the party to the ground. Guided by a handful of informers and lucky guesswork,



Iron Circle Dark Adept (A) Level 3 Controller (Leader)

Medium natural humanoid, human XP 150
 HP 46; Bloodied 23 Initiative +2
 AC 17, Fortitude 14, Reflex 14, Will 16 Perception +5
 Speed 6

STANDARD ACTIONS

- ⊕ **Dark Dagger** (fire, weapon) ◆ **At-Will**
 Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +6 vs. Reflex
 Hit: 2d4 + 4 fire damage, and the dark adept slides the target 3
- ✦ **Fiery Tendrils** (fire) ◆ **At-Will**
 Attack: Area burst 1 within 10 (creatures in burst); +6 vs. Reflex
 Hit: 1d6 + 6 fire damage, and the target is slowed and grants combat advantage until the end of the dark adept's next turn.

MINOR ACTIONS

- ◀ **Dark Imperative** (healing, necrotic) ◆ **Recharge** when bloodied
 Effect: Close burst 5 (one ally in burst). The dark adept slides the target 3 squares, and the target gains 10 temporary hit points. While the target has these temporary hit points, its melee attacks deal 3 extra necrotic damage.

Skills Arcana +8, Religion +8

Str 13 (+2) Dex 12 (+2) Wis 18 (+5)
 Con 14 (+3) Int 15 (+3) Cha 13 (+2)

Alignment evil Languages Common

Equipment chainmail, dagger, red surcoat with gold-trimmed black circle

3 Iron Circle Brigands (B)

Medium natural humanoid, human XP 100 each
 HP 28; Bloodied 14 Initiative +3
 AC 17, Fortitude 14, Reflex 13, Will 12 Perception +0
 Speed 5

STANDARD ACTIONS

- ⊕ **Scimitar** (weapon) ◆ **At-Will**
 Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +6 vs. AC
 Hit: 1d8 + 3 damage.
- ↓ **Drive Back** (weapon) ◆ **At-Will**
 Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +6 vs. AC
 Hit: 1d8 + 3 damage, the brigand pushes the target 1 square, and the brigand shifts into the square the target occupied.
- ↘ **Crossbow** (weapon) ◆ **At-Will**
 Attack: Ranged 15/30 (one creature); +6 vs. AC
 Hit: 1d8 + 1 damage.

TRIGGERED ACTIONS

- ⚔ **Relentless Assault** ◆ **At-Will**
 Trigger: An enemy adjacent to the brigand makes an attack that doesn't include the brigand as a target.
 Effect (Free Action): The triggering enemy takes 3 damage.

Str 16 (+3) Dex 12 (+1) Wis 10 (+0)
 Con 12 (+1) Int 9 (-1) Cha 9 (-1)

Alignment evil Languages Common

Equipment scale armor, light shield, scimitar, crossbow, 20 bolts, black cloak embroidered with a gray circle

one such squad comes across the adventurers as they're traveling across the vale.

Use the "Steading" battle map, folded in half so the area shown in this encounter is the only portion visible. Have the players arrange their miniatures on the road between the cottages.

4 Iron Circle Rabble (R)		Level 2 Minion Brute	
Medium natural humanoid, human		XP 31 each	
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.		Initiative +1	
AC 16, Fortitude 15, Reflex 13, Will 13		Perception +1	
Speed 6			
TRAITS			
Mob Rule			
The rabble gains a +2 power bonus to all defenses while adjacent to two or more allies.			
STANDARD ACTIONS			
Ⓢ Mace (weapon) ♦ At-Will			
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +7 vs. AC			
Hit: 5 damage.			
Str 14 (+3)	Dex 10 (+1)	Wis 10 (+1)	
Con 12 (+2)	Int 9 (+0)	Cha 9 (+0)	
Alignment evil		Languages Common	
Equipment mace, black cloak embroidered with a gray circle			

Rage Drake (D)		Level 5 Brute	
Large natural beast (mount, reptile)		XP 200	
HP 77; Bloodied 38		Initiative +3	
AC 19, Fortitude 18, Reflex 15, Will 16		Perception +4	
Speed 8			
TRAITS			
Raging Mount (mount)			
While the drake is bloodied, its rider gains a +2 bonus to attack rolls and damage rolls with melee attacks.			
STANDARD ACTIONS			
Ⓢ Bite ♦ At-Will			
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +10 vs. AC, or +12 vs. AC while the drake is bloodied			
Hit: 2d10 + 5 damage, or 2d10 + 7 while the drake is bloodied.			
Ⓢ Raking Charge ♦ At-Will			
Effect: The drake charges and makes the following attack twice against the target of its charge in place of a melee basic attack.			
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +10 vs. AC, or +12 vs. AC while the drake is bloodied			
Hit: 1d6 + 4 damage, or 1d6 + 6 while the drake is bloodied.			
Str 19 (+6)	Dex 13 (+3)	Wis 14 (+4)	
Con 17 (+5)	Int 3 (-2)	Cha 12 (+3)	
Alignment unaligned		Languages –	

Read:

You've been traveling for hours through heavy rain, and the muddy ground clings to your boots. The track you're following cuts through an abandoned farmstead a few miles from your goal, and through the fog you spot an Iron Circle brigand holding a lantern and riding a large, red-scaled drake. The drake roars, and standing behind some nearby trees are two more brigands with crossbows. Their leader, an evil-looking woman in a red surcoat, stands between them.

"There they are!" the woman shouts. "Take them!"

Place the villains and monsters in the spaces indicated on the map, and roll initiative.

Tactics

The rage drake and its rider charge the nearest enemy. The other two brigands fire their crossbows, peppering the party with bolts for a round or two before advancing. The rabble are hidden behind the fieldstone walls. Once the battle is joined, they leap over the walls and try to cut off the party's escape route.

The dark adept prefers to remain at range, using *fiery tendrils*. She saves *dark imperative* for use on the rage drake or its rider, but if a brigand is badly damaged and the adept is close to being bloodied, she'll use *dark imperative* so that she won't waste one of her two uses of the power. The adept tries to slide the recipient into a position from which it can flank a vulnerable foe.

Features of the Area

Illumination: Bright light during the day and dim light at night. The brigand riding the rage drake carries a lantern.

Weather: The rain and fog are both advantageous and detrimental. All creatures gain a +5 bonus to Stealth checks, and a creature has concealment if it is more than 5 squares away from its attacker. Moreover, the rain has turned the road, trails, and grassy areas into difficult terrain.

Cottage Furnishings: The cottages' furnishings are lightly built and offer no impediment to movement—a moving character simply kicks them aside. They can be used as improvised weapons.

Doors: The doors to the abandoned cottages are sturdy wood (DC 16 Strength check to break down; AC 5, Reflex 5, Fortitude 10, 20 hp).

Garden: These squares are difficult terrain.

Muddy Embankment: This steep, dirt road embankment is difficult terrain. Moreover, a creature entering a square of the embankment must succeed on a saving throw or fall prone in that square.

Trees: Squares occupied by tree trunks are impassable but provide cover. Climbing a tree requires a DC 10 Athletics check, and a creature up a tree gains concealment.

Wall: The fieldstone wall stands 4 feet high and provides cover against attacks that cross it. It costs 2 squares of movement to cross the wall.

Well: This 15-foot-deep well is surrounded by a low stone wall (+2 bonus to the saving throw to catch yourself). Climbing out of the well is difficult (DC 20 Athletics check).

Windows: Creatures firing through the cottage windows have cover against attacks from the outside.

ENCOUNTER T1: ENTRY CAVERN

Encounter Level 2 (700 XP)

Setup

2 **bullywug muckers** (M)
2 **bullywug leapers** (L)
3 **stirges** (S)

For this encounter, use the “Toadwallow Caverns” battle map. Place the characters along the edge of the map outside the cave entrance. Don't place the monsters on the map until the characters detect them.

The bullywug sentries aren't very attentive. If the adventurers sneak up to the cave mouth and at least half succeed on a DC 12 Stealth check, they surprise the bullywugs.

If the characters fail to catch the bullywugs by surprise (or don't try), the bullywugs notice them and set an ambush. When the adventurers reach the top of the escarpment at the mouth of the cave, have them make a DC 12 Perception check. Characters who fail are surprised and can't act in the surprise round.

When they first see the cave entrance, read:

Water gushes from a cave mouth set into the face of a vine-covered hill, forming a 10-foot-high waterfall that bleeds into a stream. You have found the entrance to the Toadwallow Caverns! The ground near the base of the hill is spongy, and clouds of insects harangue you.

Characters must climb a 10-foot-high ledge to reach the cave mouth. This requires a successful DC 12 Athletics check. Any character who fails the check by 5 or more alerts the bullywug sentries.

When the adventurers enter the cave, read:

The cave mouth opens into a dank chamber. Water gushes from a hole in the nearby wall, forming a shallow stream that plunges over the ledge behind you. A stagnant pool of water fills a corner to your right, and a thick patch of multicolored fungus grows atop a pile of offal in the middle of the cave. Two froglike humanoid creatures crouch in the shadows behind the fungi, apparently keeping watch. They wear poorly fitting armor made from leather and carry spears.

The leapers are out of sight, and the stirges are lurking in a narrow crevice in the ceiling above the stagnant pool. Because the adventurers can't see these monsters yet, do not place them on the battle map immediately. When a character moves to a place from which he or she might spot the stirges, allow the character a DC 18 Perception check (the stirges are hidden).

2 Bullywug Muckers (M)

Medium natural humanoid (aquatic)

HP 34; Bloodied 17

AC 13, Fortitude 14, Reflex 13, Will 11

Speed 6, swim 4

Level 1 Brute

XP 100 each

Initiative +2

Perception +0

TRAITS

☠ **Rancid Air** (poison) ◆ **Aura 2**

Each enemy that spends a healing surge within the aura is weakened until the end of its next turn.

Aquatic

The bullywug can breathe underwater. In aquatic combat, it gains a +2 bonus to attack rolls against nonaquatic creatures.

Nature's Release (healing)

Any attacker that scores a critical hit against the bullywug regains 3 hit points.

Swamp Walk

The bullywug ignores difficult terrain that is mud or shallow water.

STANDARD ACTIONS

⚔ **Spear** (weapon) ◆ **At-Will**

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +6 vs. AC

Hit: 2d8 + 2 damage, plus 1d6 extra damage against a prone target.

⚡ **Bullywug Rush** ◆ **Recharge** ☑ ☑

Requirement: The bullywug charges and makes the following attack instead of a melee basic attack.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +4 vs. Fortitude

Hit: 3d6 + 6 damage, plus 1d6 extra damage against a prone target, and the target falls prone.

Miss: The bullywug takes 3 damage and falls prone.

Skills Athletics +8

Str 16 (+3)

Dex 14 (+2)

Wis 10 (+0)

Con 14 (+2)

Int 6 (-2)

Cha 8 (-1)

Alignment chaotic evil Languages Primordial

Equipment leather armor, spear

Tactics

The muckers croak threats and warnings in Primordial. They hang back and allow the adventurers to come to them. Once the heroes are in the cave, the muckers try to set up a combination attack: One uses *bullywug rush* to knock down a hero, and the other attacks the prone foe.

The leapers join the battle on round 2. They throw javelins at adventurers who are fighting the muckers. If a good chance to flank an enemy arises, the leapers use *spasmodic hop* to rush in. Otherwise, they save that ability to get away from a tough melee character, moving toward any adventurer who's trying to stay back out of the fight.

The stirges stay out of combat for the first round or two. When they see one or two relatively isolated characters, they fly down to attack, gaining combat advantage if no one spotted them. A stirge that is attacked does not wait, joining the fight immediately.

Development

If the adventurers retreat from the Toadwallow Caverns to rest up, Gloorpk posts new sentries in this location the day after the adventurers leave. The new sentries include 2 bullywug muckers, 2 bullywug leapers, and 2 giant frogs (see encounter T3, pages 24-25).

2 Bullywug Leapers (L)	Level 1 Skirmisher
Medium natural humanoid (aquatic)	XP 100 each
HP 26; Bloodied 13	Initiative +6
AC 15, Fortitude 12, Reflex 14, Will 12	Perception +2
Speed 6, swim 4	
TRAITS	
☼ Rancid Air (poison) ◆ Aura 2	
Each enemy that spends a healing surge within the aura is weakened until the end of its next turn.	
Aquatic	
The bullywug can breathe underwater. In aquatic combat, it gains a +2 bonus to attack rolls against nonaquatic creatures.	
Nature's Release (healing)	
Any attacker that scores a critical hit against the bullywug regains 3 hit points.	
Swamp Walk	
The bullywug ignores difficult terrain that is mud or shallow water.	
STANDARD ACTIONS	
⚔ Spear (weapon) ◆ At-Will	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +6 vs. AC	
Hit: 1d8 + 4 damage.	
🗡 Javelin (weapon) ◆ At-Will	
Attack: Ranged 10/20 (one creature); +6 vs. AC	
Hit: 1d6 + 4 damage.	
⚡ Spasmodic Leap (weapon) ◆ Recharge [☁][☁][☁]	
Effect: Marks on the bullywug end, and it jumps 3 squares before making the attack. This movement does not provoke opportunity attacks.	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +6 vs. AC	
Hit: 2d6 + 6 damage, or 3d6 + 6 if the bullywug has combat advantage against the target, and the target takes a -2 penalty to attack rolls against the bullywug until the end of the bullywug's next turn.	
Skills Athletics +7	
Str 14 (+2)	Dex 18 (+4) Wis 14 (+2)
Con 10 (+0)	Int 10 (+0) Cha 8 (-1)
Alignment chaotic evil Languages Primordial	
Equipment spear, 4 javelins	



Features of the Area

Illumination: Bright light during the day, dim light at night.

Ceiling: The cave mouth is 10 feet high, and the inner cave is 15 feet high.

Fungus Patch: The fungus patch is difficult terrain and provides concealment against attacks crossing it. Characters who inspect the fungi and succeed on a DC 13 Nature check find several forms of edible fungus, including 3 bloodcaps and 2 milkcaps. Once picked, these mushrooms must be eaten within 24 hours, or they lose their special properties.

Bloodcap Mushroom: Any creature that eats a bloodcap mushroom gains a +1 bonus to attack rolls until the end of the next encounter.

Milkcap Mushroom: Any creature that eats a milkcap mushroom gains 5 temporary hit points that last until the end of the next encounter.

Ledge: Any creature falling off the edge takes 1d10 damage from the fall and falls prone in a square adjacent to the bottom of the ledge. The ledge slopes at a 50-degree angle—too steep to stand on—and requires a DC 12 Athletics check to climb.

Shallow Water: The stream and the pool are each about 3 feet deep. These squares are difficult terrain, but the bullywugs ignore this penalty because of their *swamp walk* trait.

Treasure: One of the bullywug leapers has a leather satchel containing 30 gp and 100 sp.

3 Stirges (S)	Level 1 Lurker
Small natural beast	XP 100 each
HP 22; Bloodied 11	Initiative +7
AC 15, Fortitude 12, Reflex 15, Will 12	Perception +0
Speed 2, fly 6	Darkvision
TRAITS	
Nimble Bloodsucker	
While the stirge has a creature grabbed, it gains a +5 bonus to AC and Reflex.	
STANDARD ACTIONS	
⚔ Bite ◆ At-Will	
Attack: The stirge must not be grabbing a creature.	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +6 vs. AC	
Hit: 1d4 + 5 damage, and the stirge grabs the target (escape DC 12). Until the grab ends, the target takes ongoing 5 damage.	
Skills Stealth +8	
Str 8 (-1)	Dex 16 (+3) Wis 10 (+0)
Con 10 (+0)	Int 1 (-5) Cha 4 (-3)
Alignment unaligned Languages —	

ENCOUNTER T2: DRAGONSKULL CAVERN

Encounter Level 2 (740 XP)

Setup

Gloorpk, bullywug chieftain (G)
5 bullywug croakers (C)
2 gray oozes (O)

This encounter uses the “Toadwallow Caverns” battle map. Don't place monsters on the map until they announce their presence or the characters detect them.

Gloorpk is chieftain of the Mud-Hides tribe. A number of lesser bullywugs attend him constantly, dotting on their fat leader in the hopes of averting his wrath. The bullywugs here are vigilant—it is unlikely that the adventurers will be able to surprise them.

The bullywugs hide upon hearing sounds of combat in encounter T1. When a character comes within 2 squares of the black dragon skull or attacks one of cavern's defenders, Gloorpk and his minions strike.

When the adventurers come within sight of the black dragon skull, read:

A giant dragon's skull dominates this damp, 15-foot-high cave. You see no other remains, suggesting that the skull was brought



here from elsewhere. Beyond the great skull, a dribble of water pouring through a crack in the ceiling forms a shallow pool nearly 20 feet across and 10 feet wide.

Characters who succeed on a DC 13 Perception check spot Gloorpk hiding inside the dragon skull, peering at them through an eye socket, as well as one or more of the croakers. Characters who fail the check can't act in the surprise round.

Once Gloorpk's location is revealed, read:

A loud croak emanates from inside the dragon skull, and bulbous eyes stare at you from behind one of the hollow eye sockets.

As the bullywug croakers emerge from hiding, Gloorpk unleashes his ranged attacks. The gray oozes slither out of their pit and join the battle the following round. Roll initiative to begin the encounter.

Gloorpk, Bullywug Chieftain (G) Level 3 Elite Artillery Medium natural humanoid (aquatic) XP 300

HP 78; Bloodied 39 Initiative +3
AC 17, Fortitude 15, Reflex 15, Will 16 Perception +9
Speed 6, swim 4
Resist 5 poison
Saving Throws +2; Action Points 1

TRAITS

☼ Rancid Air (poison) ◆ Aura 2

Each enemy that spends a healing surge within the aura is weakened until the end of its next turn.

Aquatic

Gloorpk can breathe underwater. In aquatic combat, he gains a +2 bonus to attack rolls against nonaquatic creatures.

Nature's Release (healing)

Any attacker that scores a critical hit against Gloorpk regains 5 hit points.

Swamp Walk

Gloorpk ignores difficult terrain that is mud or shallow water.

STANDARD ACTIONS

⚔ Quarterstaff (weapon) ◆ At-Will

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +8 vs. AC
Hit: 1d8 + 3 damage.

⚡ Dragonfang Bolt (poison) ◆ At-Will

Attack: Ranged 10 (one creature); +8 vs. Will
Hit: 1d10 + 4 poison damage, and all creatures adjacent to the target take 3 poison damage.

⚡ Electric Reflux (cold, lightning) ◆ At-Will

Attack: Close blast 3 (creatures in blast); +8 vs. Reflex, or +10 vs. Reflex if Gloorpk includes at least one ally in the blast
Hit: 2d6 + 4 cold and lightning damage, and the target is dazed until the end of Gloorpk's next turn.

☼ Fiery Croak (fire, thunder) ◆ Recharge [3] [1]

Attack: Area burst 1 within 10 (creatures in burst); +6 vs. Reflex, or +8 vs. Reflex if Gloorpk includes at least one ally in the burst
Hit: 2d10 + 4 fire and thunder damage.
Miss: Half damage.

Skills Arcana +7, Intimidate +7, Nature +9

Str 12 (+2) Dex 14 (+3) Wis 16 (+4)

Con 15 (+3) Int 13 (+2) Cha 13 (+2)

Alignment chaotic evil Languages Common, Primordial

Equipment quarterstaff

5 Bullywug Croakers (C) **Level 3 Minion Brute**

Medium natural humanoid (aquatic) XP 38 each

HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion. Initiative +3
 AC 15, Fortitude 15, Reflex 15, Will 13 Perception +1
 Speed 6, swim 4
 Resist 5 poison

TRAITS☼ **Rancid Air (poison)** ◆ Aura 2

Each enemy that spends a healing surge within the aura is weakened until the end of its next turn.

Aquatic

The bullywug can breathe underwater. In aquatic combat, it gains a +2 bonus to attack rolls against nonaquatic creatures.

Nature's Release (healing)

Any attacker that scores a critical hit against the bullywug regains 3 hit points.

Swamp Walk

The bullywug ignores difficult terrain that is mud or shallow water.

STANDARD ACTIONS⊕ **Claw** ◆ At-Will

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +8 vs. AC
 Hit: 7 damage.

◀ **Foul Croak (poison)** ◆ At-Will

Attack: Close blast 2 (one creature); +6 vs. Fortitude
 Hit: 4 poison damage.

Skills Athletics +6

Str 10 (+1) Dex 14 (+3) Wis 10 (+1)

Con 14 (+3) Int 6 (-1) Cha 5 (-2)

Alignment chaotic evil Languages Primordial

2 Gray Oozes (O) **Level 2 Skirmisher**

Small natural beast (blind, ooze) XP 125 each

HP 43; Bloodied 21 Initiative +5
 AC 15, Fortitude 15, Reflex 13, Will 11 Perception +2
 Speed 5, climb 3 Blind, blindsight 10, tremorsense 10
 Immune blinded, gaze; Resist 5 acid

TRAITS**Ooze**

While squeezing, the ooze moves at full speed rather than half speed, it doesn't take the -5 penalty to attack rolls, and it doesn't grant combat advantage for squeezing.

STANDARD ACTIONS⊕ **Bone Melt (acid)** ◆ At-Will

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +5 vs. Fortitude
 Hit: 1d6 + 6 acid damage, and the target takes a -2 penalty to Fortitude (save ends). The penalty to Fortitude is cumulative with multiple *bone melt* attacks.

MINOR ACTIONS

Slimy ◆ At-Will

Effect: The ooze shifts 2 squares.

Skills Stealth +12

Str 11 (+1) Dex 15 (+3) Wis 11 (+1)

Con 19 (+5) Int 1 (-4) Cha 1 (-4)

Alignment unaligned Languages -

Tactics

Gloorpk remain inside the dragon's skull, gaining the benefit of superior cover (attacks against him take a -5 penalty). Cracks and holes in the skull allow him to attack in all directions. If he's forced out of the skull, he does his best to squirm back inside.

Gloorpk begins the battle with *dragonfang bolt*. If the heroes are too far apart, he uses *fiery croak* instead. He saves *electric reflux* for when enemies get too close. If Gloorpk is bloodied and has no allies remaining, he offers to reveal the secret location of his treasure (see "Features of the Area," below) in exchange for his life.

The croakers use *foul croak* against clustered foes. Otherwise, they are straightforward combatants. If Gloorpk is slain, any remaining croakers attempt to flee.

Gloorpk keeps the barely sentient gray oozes happy with a steady supply of food. They attack the heroes indiscriminately.

Features of the Area

Illumination: Dim light. Glowing green moss grows on the walls and illuminates these caves.

Breeding Pool: The pool is fed by a steady drip of water seeping through a crack in the ceiling. The pool is 3 feet deep and contains dozens of translucent bullywug eggs (each one the size of a baseball). The eggs are easily destroyed. The pool is difficult terrain, but the bullywugs ignore this penalty because of their *swamp walk* trait. Characters in the water do not gain cover and take no attack or defense penalties.

Ceiling: The ceiling is 15 feet high throughout.

Difficult Terrain: Squares occupied by boulders are difficult terrain.

Dragon Skull: The bullywugs found this enormous black dragon's skull in a nearby swamp and brought it here. The interior of the skull is large enough to house a Medium creature, and Gloorpk cowers in here while defending his lair. The skull grants superior cover to any creature inside it.

Pit: This sinkhole is 15 feet deep and contains the bones of past meals as well as the gray oozes. A creature falling in takes 1d10 damage. The pit's walls are uneven (DC 15 Athletics check to climb).

Pile of Skulls: Hidden under this 4-foot-high cairn of skulls is Gloorpk's treasure (see below). Creatures can move into the square without penalty simply by kicking the skulls out of the way.

Treasure: The bullywug chieftain's hoard is contained within an unlocked chest hidden under the pile of skulls: a level 4 magic item, a level 3 magic item, a *potion of healing*, a sapphire worth 100 gp, and 170 gp.

ENCOUNTER T3: RAIDING PARTY

Encounter Level 3 (750 XP)

Setup

Uggloor, bullywug champion (U)
2 bullywug leapers (L)
2 giant frogs (F)
Heron, halfling boy (H)

This encounter uses the “Toadswallow Caverns” battle map and occurs as the heroes are preparing to leave the bullywug lair. Have the players place their characters in the outer cave (where encounter T1 took place).

Uggloor, the champion of the Mud-Hides tribe, has just returned from a raid with a prisoner in tow—a gift to amuse Chieftain Gloorpk. Uggloor croaks loudly as he approaches the cave, to inform the bullywug sentries that he has returned. The characters don't need to make Perception checks to hear Uggloor's croak. However, Uggloor expects a reply. A character must respond with a similar croaking noise (a DC 15 Bluff check); if the check fails or the characters choose not to respond, Uggloor concludes that something is amiss, and neither he nor his raiding party can be surprised.



When the heroes can see the raiding party, read:

A hulking bullywug approaches the cave mouth with a crude spear in one hand and short rope grasped tightly in the other. The rope ends in a noose around the neck of a ghost-faced halfling boy who looks fatigued. Two smaller bullywugs with javelins and a pair of giant frogs accompany them.

When he sees the adventurers, Uggloor lets go of his prisoner, allowing the halfling to run away (see “Development”). Roll initiative to begin the encounter.

Uggloor, Bullywug Champion (U)	Level 2 Elite Soldier	
Medium natural humanoid (aquatic)	XP 250	
HP 76; Bloodied 38	Initiative +5	
AC 18, Fortitude 15, Reflex 14, Will 12	Perception +0	
Speed 6, swim 4		
Saving Throws +2; Action Points 1		
TRAITS		
☼ Rancid Air (poison) ◆ Aura 2 Each enemy that spends a healing surge within the aura is weakened until the end of its next turn.		
Aquatic Uggloor can breathe underwater. In aquatic combat, he gains a +2 bonus to attack rolls against nonaquatic creatures.		
Nature's Release (healing) Any attacker that scores a critical hit against Uggloor regains 4 hit points.		
Swamp Walk Uggloor ignores difficult terrain that is mud or shallow water.		
STANDARD ACTIONS		
⚔ Spear (weapon) ◆ At-Will Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +7 vs. AC Hit: 1d8 + 5 damage Effect: The target is marked until the end of Uggloor's next turn.		
🏹 Crossbow (weapon) ◆ At-Will Attack: Ranged 15/30 (one creature); +7 vs. AC Hit: 1d8 + 2 damage.		
⚔ Champion's Charge (weapon) ◆ At-Will Effect: Uggloor charges and makes the following attack instead of a melee basic attack. Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +7 vs. AC Hit: 2d8 + 2 damage. Effect: The target is marked until the end of Uggloor's next turn.		
MINOR ACTIONS		
⏪ Taunting Croak ◆ Recharge when Uggloor spends an action point Attack: Close burst 5 (enemies in burst); +5 vs. Will Hit: Uggloor pulls the target 4 squares.		
TRIGGERED ACTIONS		
⚔ Interceding Strike (weapon) ◆ At-Will Trigger: A creature marked by Uggloor makes an attack that doesn't include Uggloor as a target. Attack (<i>Immediate Interrupt</i>): Melee 1 (triggering creature); +7 vs. AC Hit: 1d8 + 5 damage. Miss: Half damage.		
Skills Athletics +9		
Str 17 (+4)	Dex 14 (+3)	Wis 10 (+1)
Con 14 (+3)	Int 6 (-1)	Cha 8 (+0)
Alignment chaotic evil		Languages Primordial
Equipment leather armor, spear, crossbow, 10 bolts		

2 Bullywug Leapers (L) Level 1 Skirmisher

Medium natural humanoid (aquatic) XP 100 each

HP 26; Bloodied 13 Initiative +6
AC 15, Fortitude 12, Reflex 14, Will 12 Perception +2
Speed 6, swim 4

TRAITS

Rancid Air (poison) ◆ Aura 2
Each enemy that spends a healing surge within the aura is weakened until the end of its next turn.

Aquatic
The bullywug can breathe underwater. In aquatic combat, it gains a +2 bonus to attack rolls against nonaquatic creatures.

Nature's Release (healing)
Any attacker that scores a critical hit against the bullywug regains 3 hit points.

Swamp Walk
The bullywug ignores difficult terrain that is mud or shallow water.

STANDARD ACTIONS

⊕ **Spear** (weapon) ◆ At-Will
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +6 vs. AC
Hit: 1d8 + 4 damage.

⊕ **Javelin** (weapon) ◆ At-Will
Attack: Ranged 10/20 (one creature); +6 vs. AC
Hit: 1d6 + 4 damage.

⊕ **Spasmodic Leap** (weapon) ◆ Recharge ☐☐☐☐
Effect: Marks on the bullywug end, and it jumps 3 squares before making the attack. This movement does not provoke opportunity attacks.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +6 vs. AC
Hit: 2d6 + 6 damage, or 3d6 + 6 if the bullywug has combat advantage against the target, and the target takes a -2 penalty to attack rolls against the bullywug until the end of the bullywug's next turn.

Skills Athletics +7
Str 14 (+2) Dex 18 (+4) Wis 14 (+2)
Con 10 (+0) Int 10 (+0) Cha 8 (-1)

Alignment chaotic evil Languages Primordial
Equipment spear, 4 javelins

2 Giant Frogs (F) Level 3 Controller

Medium natural beast XP 150 each

HP 44; Bloodied 22 Initiative +5
AC 17, Fortitude 15, Reflex 16, Will 13 Perception +6
Speed 4, swim 6

STANDARD ACTIONS

⊕ **Bite** ◆ At-Will
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +8 vs. AC
Hit: 1d6 + 5 damage, and if the target is Medium or smaller, it is swallowed. A swallowed target is stunned and takes ongoing 5 damage (save ends both), and no creature has line of sight or line of effect to the target.

Special: The frog can swallow only one creature at a time and cannot use bite while swallowing a creature.

MOVE ACTIONS

Prodigious Leap ◆ At-Will
Effect: The frog jumps 4 squares. This movement does not provoke opportunity attacks.

MINOR ACTIONS

⊕ **Grasping Tongue** ◆ At-Will (1/round)
Attack: Ranged 3 (one creature); +6 vs. Reflex
Hit: The frog pulls the target 2 squares.

Str 14 (+3) Dex 17 (+4) Wis 11 (+1)
Con 12 (+2) Int 2 (-3) Cha 6 (-1)

Alignment unaligned Languages –

Heron, Halfling Boy (H) Level 2 Minion Skirmisher

Medium natural humanoid XP 0

HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion. Initiative +4
AC 16, Fortitude 14, Reflex 14, Will 13 Perception +0
Speed 6

TRIGGERED ACTIONS

Second Chance ◆ Encounter

Trigger: An enemy hits Heron with an attack.
Effect (Immediate Interrupt): The triggering enemy rerolls the attack roll and must use the new result.

Skills Acrobatics +7, Nature +5, Thievery +7

Str 10 (+1) Dex 13 (+2) Wis 8 (+0)
Con 12 (+2) Int 10 (+1) Cha 11 (+1)

Alignment unaligned Languages Common

Tactics

Uggloor climbs the ledge and charges the nearest foe. On the next round, he uses *taunting croak* to pull as many enemies adjacent to him as possible. He then attacks the softest-looking target and uses *interceding strike* as opportunity allows. The bullywug champion is overconfident and fights until slain.

The leapers let Uggloor hold the front line while they hang back and hurl javelins. If Uggloor is bloodied or they run out of javelins, the leapers use *spasmodic leap* to shift into positions where they can flank an enemy and attack with their spears. If Uggloor drops to 0 hit points, the leapers flee.

The giant frogs use *grasping tongue* to reel in prey. If a frog succeeds in swallowing an enemy, it uses *prodigious leap* to avoid being cornered by other enemies.

Features of the Area

Illumination: Bright light during the day, and dim light at night.

Ledge: Any creature falling off the edge takes 1d10 damage and falls prone in a square adjacent to the bottom of the ledge. The ledge slopes at a 50-degree angle—too steep to stand on—and requires a DC 12 Athletics check to climb.

Shallow Water: The stream and pool are about 3 feet deep. These squares are difficult terrain, but the bullywugs ignore this penalty because of their *swamp walk* trait.

Treasure: The bullywugs carry sacks of plundered foodstuffs and supplies, including fish and dried meat. Uggloor also has a belt pouch containing 15 gp, 60 sp, and a flawed emerald worth 100 gp.

Development

Heron is a 12-year-old member of the Reedfoot clan (see page 10). He and two friends were ambushed by bullywugs hiding along a muddy shore of the White River. His friends escaped, but Heron was captured. Heron flees at the first opportunity, but he's too tired to get very far. If the heroes prevail, he waits for them to emerge from the caves before asking for their help getting back to his clan. If the characters assist, they lose a half-day of travel time but receive a minor quest reward (150 XP) and the gratitude of the Reedfoot halflings.

ENCOUNTER D1: THE WOODSINGER ELVES

The Harken Forest is a big place, and it might take the heroes some time to locate the Woodsinger camp. If the adventurers set out from Albridge, it's about 22 miles to the Woodsinger camp by way of the tracks that run between Marl and Harken.

Meeting the Woodsingers

The party can follow the track south into the Harken Forest easily enough. In time, they should reach an intersection between two tracks. If they use another approach route, the following read-aloud text remains the same.

Read:

It's warm, almost stifling, under the canopy of the forest, and not a breath of wind stirs. As you pause to gain your bearings, peering into the forest gloom, you hear a voice, "Hold there, strangers! We would speak with you."

A moment later an elf dressed in a short tunic of brown and green steps into the open and advances toward you, a bow in his hand. "I am Israfen of the Woodsingers," he says. "I see that you are not Harkenwolders, and you do not look like the mercenaries of Iron Keep. Who are you, and what is your business in the Harken Forest?"

Israfen hears out the heroes and then replies, "This is a matter for Eriyel. Come, follow me." Two more elves step out of the shadows to join him, and the three hunters lead the party to a small elven encampment in a clearing by

a forest stream. There, Israfen introduces the heroes to Eriyel, an elf woman of middle years with dark eyes and long green-gold hair. She is the chief of the Woodsinger clans.

After speaking with the heroes (see the sidebar below), Eriyel gives them a tiny crystal vial containing the blood of a green dragon and sets them on the path to Dal Nystiere. The elves have only the one vial, so Eriyel urges the heroes not to lose it. The vial holds enough blood to activate the ring of standing stones three times.

Returning from Dal Nystiere

When the adventurers return from the sanctuary with evidence of Yisarn's demise, the Woodsingers are as good as their word.

Read:

On hearing your story, Eriyel gravely nods. "Our thanks, strangers," she says. "You have proved your good intentions, and rid the forest of an old and restless evil. We pledge to you all the help in our power. I will send runners to all the nearby bands. By sundown tomorrow, we'll have fifty elven bows to help the Harkenwolders win their freedom."

"Now this. Our scouts have been in touch with Harkenwolders living near the forest. They have heard that the Iron Circle is preparing to march against those who resist them. Reithann and others who still fight against the Iron Circle are gathering at Albridge to give battle. We will join you there in two days' time."

Proceed with encounter B1 (*Reavers of Harkenwold Part 2: The Die Is Cast*, page 3) when you're ready to continue.

ROLEPLAYING ERIYEL

Eriyel is reserved and patient. She is willing to let the heroes make their case, but she's firmly against the idea of sending her people into someone else's war. She'll want the heroes to prove their sincerity (and demonstrate their competence) by dealing with a problem troubling the forest elves—a sanctuary on the outskirts of Dal Nystiere.

Eriyel speaks slowly and softly. She weighs her words carefully, and often lets a nod or look suffice as an answer to a question.

Greetings. "You are in great haste, that much is plain. What do you wish of my people?"

Can you help Harkenwold? "I grieve for the evil that has come over their land, but it is not our fight."

What about your friends there? "Some among the Harkenwolders are indeed our friends, but others treat the forest with less respect than we do, and some fear us. Would they come to our aid? I doubt it."

If you do nothing, you're next. "There could be truth in what you say. Evil left unchecked cannot help but spread. Still, I deem it better to wait and watch for now. Given time, this Iron Circle may simply move on."

How can we convince you to help? "You ask us to risk our lives for you. If you were to do the same for us, we would be obligated to match your selflessness. There is a sanctuary hidden beneath a ring of standing stones, near the ruins of Dal Nystiere, an old eladrin village a few miles from here. An evil presence there poisons the surrounding forest. Put an end to this threat, and we will aid you."

Evil presence? "An undead wizard named Yisarn lurks in the sanctuary. He has allied himself with the Daggerburg goblins, our hated enemies. Defeating him would be a great service to us."

What can you tell us about the sanctuary? "Wizards used the sanctuary as a private place to conduct magical research. It lies underground, but you can teleport there by pouring dragon's blood onto a pedestal located in the ring of standing stones."

Where can we get some dragon's blood? "I can provide you with a vial of green dragon's blood, which we obtained at great cost. I give it to you as a sign of our trust."

ENCOUNTER D2: THE STANDING STONES

Encounter Level 2 (693 XP)

Setup

4 tree spiders (S)
3 goblin toadies (G)

This encounter uses the “Standing Stones” battle map. Place the characters on the trail near the edge of the map. The spiders hide in the trees, and the goblins sleep inside the wagon. Don't place the monsters on the map immediately.

Statistics for the goblin toadies appear on page 29.

When the adventurers enter this area, read:

The ancient, crumbling road passes by an old circle of standing stones. Webs cling to the branches of the nearby trees. A ramshackle covered wagon is parked on the trail near the standing stones.

Any character who succeeds on a DC 19 Perception check spots the closest spider. If none of the heroes succeed on the check, the party is surprised when the spiders attack.

The adventurers can sneak up on the sleeping goblins with a successful DC 11 Stealth check. If combat erupts between the heroes and the goblins, the spiders leap from their hiding places in the trees and join the fray.



4 Tree Spiders (S)		Level 3 Skirmisher
Medium natural beast (spider)		XP 150 each
HP 43; Bloodied 21		Initiative +6
AC 17, Fortitude 15, Reflex 17, Will 14		Perception +6
Speed 6, climb 6 (spider climb)		Tremorsense 5
TRAITS		
Web Walk		
The spider ignores difficult terrain composed of webs.		
STANDARD ACTIONS		
⊕ Bite (poison) ◆ At-Will		
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +8 vs. AC		
Hit: 1d6 + 3 damage, and the target takes ongoing 5 poison damage (save ends).		
⊕ Springing Attack ◆ At-Will		
Effect: The spider jumps 4 squares, makes a melee basic attack, and jumps 4 squares. This movement does not provoke opportunity attacks.		
Skills Stealth +9		
Str 12 (+2)	Dex 16 (+4)	Wis 10 (+1)
Con 11 (+1)	Int 1 (-4)	Cha 8 (+0)
Alignment unaligned		Languages –

Tactics

The tree spiders are greedy for their own kills, and they split up to attack different characters.

The goblins fight until only one remains, at which point the surviving goblin surrenders. A captured goblin reveals only that it works for Snilvor, a goblin emissary sent from Daggerburg (a distant goblin stronghold) to obtain some map scrolls from Yisarn.

Features of the Area

Illumination: Bright light during the day, dim at night.

Boulders: These squares are difficult terrain.

Bushes: These squares are difficult terrain and provide concealment to creatures in or behind them.

Ring of Standing Stones: Squares occupied by the standing stones are impassable, but a creature can stand on top of a stone. Each stone is 10 feet high and requires a DC 10 Athletics check to climb. Some residual magic lingers in the area, and any creature standing inside the circle gains a +2 bonus to damage rolls.

A crumbling stone pedestal stands in the center of the circle. Pouring a small amount of dragon's blood onto the pedestal causes glowing Elven runes to appear on the standing stones. The runes remain until someone speaks the words “Dal Nystiere,” at which point all creatures inside the ring of stones are teleported to the sanctuary (see encounter D3).

Trees: Squares occupied by tree trunks are impassable but provide cover. Climbing a tree requires a DC 10 Athletics check, and a creature up a tree gains concealment. The webs in the trees do not hamper movement.

Wagon: Creatures in the wagon have cover against attacks from outside. The wagon contains provisions as well as a heap of furs that serves as a bed for the goblin emissary Snilvor (encounter D3). Snilvor's drakes normally pull the wagon.

ENCOUNTER D3: WIZARD WORKSHOP

Encounter Level 2 (655 XP)

Setup

Snilvor, goblin emissary (S)

5 goblin toadies (G)

2 bloodseeker drakes (D)

This encounter uses the “Dal Nystiere” battle map. The characters teleport into the chamber, appearing in one of the glowing teleportation circles on the floor (roll randomly for each character). Place the monsters as indicated on the map.

Snilvor and his entourage have come to pay homage to Yisarn and to secure three map scrolls. The scrolls (see “Features of the Area”) will help the goblins in their ongoing battle against the Woodsinger elves.

Read:

The forest disappears in a pulse of blue light, and you find yourself standing in one of two magic circles inscribed on the floor of what appears to be a wizard's laboratory or workshop. You see several large tables and desks littered with mildewed tomes, dusty bottles, and loose sheets of parchment. A wide staircase climbs 10 feet to a stone loft, atop which rests a wooden desk and a chair made of lashed bones. Several goblins have gathered in the room, and they stare at you with wide eyes. Near an iron-bound set of double doors stand two cages, each one holding a man-sized drake with crimson scales wearing a yoke. The drakes snarl and bare their fangs.

Roll initiative for the goblins and drakes to begin the encounter.

Tactics

Snilvor commands his goblin toadies to release the bloodseeker drakes from their cages. To free a drake, a goblin must be in a square adjacent to the cage door and must spend a minor action to lift the door latch.

Snilvor tries to keep one or more toadies between him and the characters while using *rod of command* or *grasping mist*. The goblin toadies try to stay within 3 squares of Snilvor to gain the benefit of his aura while also maneuvering into flanking positions. When one of his toadies drops to 0 hit points, Snilvor uses *die for me* to gain temporary hit points. Note that temporary hit points do not stack.

The drakes are Snilvor's pets, but they are poorly treated, difficult to command, and hungry. If Snilvor is bloodied, they are as likely to attack him as any other character in melee range.

Snilvor, Goblin Emissary (S) Level 3 Controller (Leader)

Small natural humanoid XP 150

HP 48; Bloodied 24 Initiative +3

AC 17, Fortitude 16, Reflex 15, Will 15 Perception +3

Speed 6 Low-light vision

TRAITS

☼ **Master of Toadies** ◆ Aura 3

Minion allies gain a +2 bonus to all defenses while within the aura.

STANDARD ACTIONS

⚔ **Skull-Topped Rod** (necrotic, weapon) ◆ At-Will

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +8 vs. AC

Hit: 2d6 necrotic damage.

☞ **Rod of Command** (charm, implement, psychic) ◆ At-Will

Attack: Ranged 5 (one creature); +6 vs. Will

Hit: The target is dominated until the end of Snilvor's next turn.

The target can choose not to be dominated but takes 2d6 + 5 psychic damage instead.

Miss: Snilvor slides the target 2 squares.

☼ **Grasping Mist** (cold, zone) ◆ Recharge ☼ ☼ ☼

Attack: Area burst 1 within 5 (enemies in burst); +6 vs. Reflex

Hit: 1d8 + 5 cold damage.

Effect: The blast becomes a zone that lasts until the end of Snilvor's next turn. All squares within the zone are difficult terrain to Snilvor's enemies.

TRIGGERED ACTIONS

☞ **Die For Me** ◆ At-Will

Trigger: A minion ally within Snilvor's line of sight drops to 0 hit points.

Effect (No Action): Snilvor gains 5 temporary hit points.

Skills Arcana +7, Diplomacy +7, Insight +8

Str 11 (+0) Dex 14 (+3) Wis 15 (+3)

Con 16 (+4) Int 13 (+2) Cha 12 (+2)

Alignment evil Languages Common, Goblin

Equipment robes, skull-topped rod, dagger

Features of the Area

Illumination: Bright light. The teleportation circles on the floor and the braziers surrounding them illuminate the chamber.

Cages: The cages (AC 5, Reflex 5, Fortitude 10, 50 hp) are 5 feet tall, with iron bars set into a thick wooden floor and roof. The bars are spaced 4 inches apart, and the cages provide cover to creatures inside and behind them. Each cage door is made of wood with bars running through it, held in place by a sturdy latch in the middle of the door that cannot be reached from inside. Unlatching and opening a door from outside is a minor action. Breaking open the door requires a DC 22 Strength check.

Ceiling: The ceiling is 20 feet high (10 feet high above the loft).

Double Doors: Both sets of double doors (AC 15, Reflex 5, Fortitude 15, 60 hp) are made of gilded wood and locked. Yisarn carries the key, but the doors can also be unlocked with a DC 15 Thievery check or smashed open with a DC 18 Strength check.

Furnishings: The tables, desk, and chair create difficult terrain in their spaces. If a piece of furniture is flipped on its side (a standard action), it becomes a low wall that provides cover against attacks crossing it.

5 Goblin Toadies (G)**Level 2 Minion Skirmisher**

Small natural humanoid

XP 31 each

HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.

Initiative +6

AC 16, Fortitude 14, Reflex 15, Will 12

Perception +1

Speed 6

Low-light vision

TRAITS**Small Menace**

The goblin does not provoke opportunity attacks from creatures of Medium size or larger.

STANDARD ACTIONS⊕ **Mace (weapon)** ◆ **At-Will**

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +7 vs. AC

Hit: 5 damage (or 7 if the goblin has combat advantage against the target).

Skills Stealth +9, Thievery +9

Str 13 (+2)

Dex 17 (+4)

Wis 11 (+1)

Con 14 (+3)

Int 8 (+0)

Cha 8 (+0)

Alignment evil

Languages Common, Goblin

Equipment leather armor, mace

2 Bloodseeker Drakes (D)**Level 4 Soldier**

Medium natural beast (reptile)

XP 175 each

HP 53; Bloodied 26

Initiative +7

AC 20, Fortitude 15, Reflex 17, Will 15

Perception +7

Speed 6

STANDARD ACTIONS⊕ **Bite** ◆ **At-Will**

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +9 vs. AC

Hit: 1d10 + 5 damage, or 1d10 + 10 against a bloodied target.

TRIGGERED ACTIONS⊕ **Bloody Frenzy** ◆ **At-Will**

Trigger: A bloodied enemy adjacent to the drake shifts.

Effect (Opportunity Action): The drake uses bite against the triggering enemy.

Str 13 (+3)

Dex 17 (+5)

Wis 10 (+2)

Con 13 (+3)

Int 2 (-2)

Cha 13 (+3)

Alignment unaligned

Languages –

Loft: This raised section of the room is 10 feet above the main floor. Glowing runes inscribed along the perimeter of the floor mark the edge of a 4-square-by-4-square zone. Any living creature that enters or starts its turn in the zone takes 5 necrotic damage. The goblins are aware of the runes' power and avoid the loft. Characters searching the desk find an old tome and three scrolls (see "Scrolls," below).

Yisarn recovered the tome from the ruins of Dal Nystiere. The book, written by an unnamed eladrin wizard, chronicles her many exploits and experiments. It is worth 250 gp to an interested buyer.

Scrolls: Atop Yisarn's desk are three scrolls that the undead wizard plans to give to Snilver. Each scroll is a map showing the location and layout of an elven crypt in the Harken Forest. The Daggerburg goblins intend to ransack these "lost crypts" to fatten their coffers and demoralize the Woodsinger elves. Other scrolls and papers scattered throughout the workroom contain notes pertaining to various rituals but have no intrinsic value.

Stairs: The stone steps climbing up to the loft are considered difficult terrain while ascending them and normal terrain otherwise.



Teleportation Circles: A creature standing in either of these permanent teleportation circles and speaking the phrase "Dal Nystiere" (as a free action) teleports to a random square within the circle of standing stones above the wizards' sanctuary (see encounter D2). However, Yisarn has corrupted the circles' magic. A creature using either circle to teleport must succeed on a DC 13 Arcana check or take 1d6 + 4 lightning damage in transit. If Yisarn is adjacent to the circle, this effect does not occur.

Development

Yisarn (see encounter D4) hears sounds of combat in this room but does not investigate. Instead, he waits for intruders to come to him.

If the heroes capture one or more goblins, they don't have much to offer. Snilver and his toadies hail from the distant goblin stronghold of Daggerburg and seek to maintain good relations with Yisarn as well as procure three map scrolls. Yisarn has already received payment, and the goblins believe that Yisarn is in the next room. They know that both sets of double doors lead to Yisarn's library, but the goblins know nothing about the secret pit traps beyond the doors.

ENCOUNTER D4: YISARN'S LAIR

Encounter Level 4 (975 XP)

Setup

Yisarn, skeletal mage (Y)
2 skeletons (S)
1 glimmerweb spider (G)
2 spiked pits (traps)

Yisarn broods in his library, contemplating how best to rid himself of the Woodsinger elves. Yisarn was alive when he first came to plunder the ruins of Dal Nystiere. A band of elves ambushed and killed him, but an evil curse animated his bones, turning him into an undead horror. Yisarn spends his days poring over arcane tomes salvaged from Dal Nystiere and the surrounding towns, searching for ways to increase his power. He detests the Woodsinger elves and schemes against them constantly.

This encounter uses the "Dal Nystiere" battle map. Because the monsters are quiet and the doors are closed, the heroes have little chance to surprise them.

In addition to the monsters, this encounter includes two spiked pit traps not shown on the battle map. See "Features of the Area" for rules on how they work, and use the spiked pit tokens to mark their locations once they're revealed.

The room can be described to players as follows:

A magnificent mural of a forest scene covers the ceiling of a vaulted chamber adorned with statues of eladrin warriors and illuminated by fiery braziers. Between two braziers, atop a 2-foot-high stone bier, lie the partially assembled bones of a dragon. Web-strewn bookshelves packed with dusty tomes line the far wall, and a thick curtain of gossamer webs obscures a set of iron doors. Nestled in the webs is a monstrous spider.

Two skeletons stand guard in the middle of the room. A third skeleton—this one wearing the tattered robes of a mage—has bony claws that crackle with lightning. It scowls hatefully.

Tactics

The skeletons try to prevent intruders from reaching their master, even if that means provoking opportunity attacks.

The spider tries to snare enemies with *glimmering web*. On the next round, it teleports adjacent to a creature that can't see it and uses *bite*. When hit by an attack, it uses *fey escape* to teleport away, preferably behind its curtain of webs.

Yisarn opens the battle with *lightning talons*, unless the adventurers are too far away or too many allies would be caught in the blast. In those cases, he attacks with *ice dart* first, perhaps knocking an enemy into a brazier or spiked pit. He uses *necrotic burst* when he takes damage and has one or more enemies adjacent to him.

Yisarn, Skeletal Mage (Y)		Level 3 Elite Controller
Medium natural humanoid (undead)		XP 300
HP 94; Bloodied 47	Initiative +1	
AC 17, Fortitude 14, Reflex 16, Will 15	Perception +4	
Speed 6	Darkvision	
Immune disease, poison; Resist 10 necrotic; Vulnerable 5 radiant		
Saving Throws +2; Action Points 1		
STANDARD ACTIONS		
⚡ Lightning Grasp (lightning) ♦ At-Will		
Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +6 vs. Reflex		
Hit: 1d6 + 5 lightning damage, and the target is dazed until the end of Yisarn's next turn.		
❄️ Icy Dart (cold) ♦ At-Will		
Attack: Ranged 10 (one creature); +6 vs. Fortitude		
Hit: 1d8 + 6 cold damage, and Yisarn pushes the target 1 square, and the target is slowed (save ends).		
Miss: The target is slowed until the end of Yisarn's next turn.		
⚡ Lightning Talons (lightning) ♦ Recharge ☞ ☞		
Attack: Close blast 5 (creatures in burst); +6 vs. Reflex		
Hit: 2d6 + 4 lightning damage, and the target is dazed until the end of Yisarn's next turn.		
Effect: Yisarn slides the target 3 squares to another square within the blast.		
TRIGGERED ACTIONS		
⚡ Necrotic Burst (necrotic) ♦ At-Will		
Trigger: Yisarn takes damage from an attack.		
Attack (Immediate Reaction): Close burst 1 (enemies in burst); +6 vs. Fortitude		
Hit: 2d6 + 3 necrotic damage, and Yisarn pushes the target 2 squares. If the target is dazed, it falls unconscious (save ends).		
Skills Arcana +10, Dungeoneering +10, History +10		
Str 12 (+2)	Dex 11 (+1)	Wis 16 (+4)
Con 15 (+3)	Int 18 (+5)	Cha 11 (+1)
Alignment evil		Languages Common, Draconic, Elven
Equipment keys to locked doors		

2 Skeletons (S)		Level 3 Soldier
Medium natural animate (undead)		XP 150 each
HP 45; Bloodied 22	Initiative +6	
AC 19, Fortitude 15, Reflex 16, Will 15	Perception +3	
Speed 6	Darkvision	
Immune disease, poison; Resist 10 necrotic; Vulnerable 5 radiant		
TRAITS		
Speed of the Dead		
The skeleton gains a +2 bonus to attack rolls and deals 1d6 extra damage on opportunity attacks.		
STANDARD ACTIONS		
⚔️ Longsword (weapon) ♦ At-Will		
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +8 vs. AC		
Hit: 1d8 + 5 damage, and the target is marked until the end of the skeleton's next turn.		
Str 15 (+3)	Dex 17 (+4)	Wis 14 (+3)
Con 13 (+2)	Int 3 (-3)	Cha 3 (-3)
Alignment unaligned		Languages —
Equipment longsword		

Features of the Area

Illumination: Bright light (braziers).

Bookshelves: Each bookcase (AC 4, Reflex 4, Fortitude 12, 40 hit points) is stuffed with moldy tomes, none of great value. It can be toppled with a DC 15 Strength check or any attack that pulls or slides. Creatures in the 2-square-by-4-square area directly in front of a toppling

Glimmerweb Spider (G)		Level 4 Lurker	
Large fey magical beast (spider)		XP 175	
HP 43; Bloodied 21	Initiative +8		
AC 18, Fortitude 17, Reflex 16, Will 15	Perception +3		
Speed 6, climb 6 (spider climb)	Darkvision		
TRAITS			
Web Walk			
The spider ignores difficult terrain comprised of webs.			
STANDARD ACTIONS			
⚔ Bite (poison) ♦ At-Will			
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +9 vs. AC			
Hit: 2d8 + 3 poison damage (or 2d8 + 10 if the target cannot see the spider).			
✨ Glimmering Web (radiant) ♦ At-Will			
Attack: Area burst 1 within 5 (creatures in burst); +7 vs. Reflex			
Hit: 1d6 + 1 radiant damage, and the target is blinded and restrained (save ends both).			
Effect: The spider becomes invisible until the end of its next turn.			
TRIGGERED ACTIONS			
Fey Escape (teleportation) ♦ At-Will			
Trigger: The spider is hit by an attack.			
Effect (Immediate Reaction): The spider teleports 6 squares.			
Str 17 (+5)	Dex 15 (+4)	Wis 12 (+3)	
Con 13 (+3)	Int 7 (+0)	Cha 9 (+1)	
Alignment evil		Languages –	

bookcase take 1d8 damage, fall prone, and are restrained and unable to stand (save ends both).

Braziers: These bronze bowls are 3 feet high and fill their squares. A brazier deals 1d10 fire damage to any creature entering its square. A creature within reach of a brazier can topple it as a minor action and make

the following attack (treating the brazier's square as the attack's origin square).

MINOR ACTION

◀ **Brazier (fire)** ♦ Encounter

Attack: Close blast 2 (creatures in blast); +5 vs. Reflex
Hit: 1d10 fire damage.

Ceiling: The ceiling is 20 feet high.

Dragon Bones: Yisarn plans to animate these bones to create a skeletal black dragon servant. Currently the bones are inanimate and harmless.

Iron Doors: The iron double doors that lead off the map are locked (AC 15, Reflex 5, Fortitude 15, 60 hp). Yisarn carries the key, but the doors can also be unlocked with a DC 20 Thievery check or smashed open with a DC 25 Strength check. The doors conceal a long tunnel that eventually leads to the surface (or to another dungeon complex of your own creation).

Lever: Set into the floor of an alcove is a large iron lever. Pulling the lever locks the spiked pits and keeps them from triggering when stepped on.

Spiked Pits: The pits are 10 feet deep and hidden under false floors. Detecting the nearest one requires a DC 20 Perception check. A pit attacks any creature that enters its space. One can jump over the pit with a successful Athletics check (DC 10 with a running start, DC 20 without). Scaling a pit wall is a DC 15 Athletics check. Disabling a pit so it can't open requires a DC 15 Thievery check.

TRIGGERED ACTION

⚔ **Spiked Pit** ♦ At-Will

Trigger: A creature enters the pit's space.

Attack (Free Action): Melee 0 (triggering creature); +4 vs. Reflex
Hit: The target takes 1d10 + 6 damage and falls prone at the bottom of the pit.

Miss: The target returns to the last square it occupied.

Effect: The pit is no longer hidden.

Statues: These statues depict eladrin warriors. A creature in the square behind a statue gains cover.

Webs: The webs are difficult terrain and provide concealment. A creature that enters a web square must make a DC 13 Acrobatics or Athletics check or become immobilized. An immobilized creature can escape with a DC 13 Acrobatics or Athletics check (as a move action). The glimmerweb spider has *web walk* and can move through the webs without hindrance.

Treasure: One of the bookshelves holds a wooden coffer containing a level 5 magic item, three small agates (50 gp each), a platinum ring of eladrin design (350 gp), and a sack of 120 gp.

Continuing the Adventure

See "Returning from Dal Nystiere" on page 26.





DUNGEONS & DRAGONS[®]



REAVERS OF HARKENWOLD[™]

PART 2: THE DIE IS CAST

Roleplaying Game Adventure Book 2

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INTRODUCTION

Reavers of Harkenwold™ is a two-part DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® adventure set in the Nentir Vale, a region introduced in the *DUNGEONS & DRAGONS Fantasy Roleplaying Game*. The first half of the adventure takes the characters from 2nd to 3rd level and is presented in the adventure book titled *Reavers of Harkenwold Part 1: The Iron Circle*. The second half the adventure, which is designed to take characters from 3rd to 4th level, appears in this book.

The overall backstory and flow of the adventure are covered in *Reavers of Harkenwold Part 1: The Iron Circle*. Before running the second part of the adventure, you should review the "Adventure Synopsis" and "Freeing Harkenwold" sections in the first adventure book (pages 3-5), as well as the sections detailing the villages of Albridge and Harken. Part 2 of the adventure begins with the heroes defending the village of Albridge from an Iron Circle attack (encounters B1 through B4). If they succeed, they can take the fight to the Iron Circle leadership with a daring assault on Iron Keep (encounters K1 through K7).

The foldout battle maps included with the adventure don't encompass every encounter. For encounters that the battle maps don't cover (specifically encounters K4 through K7), you can either draw the maps for your players using wet-erase markers and a blank battle map (available for purchase at your local hobby store), or you can try to build the maps using D&D® Dungeon Tiles.

If you have preprinted plastic D&D® miniatures, you can use them to represent the various monsters and villains in this adventure, or you can use the tokens contained in this box or the *Monster Vault™* boxed set.

Getting Started

This book assumes that you've already played through the encounters in *Reavers of Harkenwold Part 1: The Iron Circle* and are familiar with the overall structure of the adventure. This book picks up where the first half the adventure leaves off. Make sure that the characters have time to take an extended rest, gather their quest rewards, and gain a level before continuing the adventure.

If all goes well in Part 1, the adventurers have made names for themselves in the barony of Harkenwold, forged an alliance with the Woodsinger elves, and defied the Iron Circle at every turn. When you're ready to continue the adventure, proceed with encounter B1.

ENCOUNTER B1: BATTLE PLANS

Shortly after the heroes return from Dal Nystiere, they learn that the Iron Circle is preparing to march on Albridge to squash the rebellion at its source.

When you are ready to launch into the Battle of Albridge portion of the storyline, read:

You are about to make camp for the night after your latest efforts in the fight against the Iron Circle when the galloping hoof beats of a lone rider echo in the dusk. A moment later, a young halfling woman on a small riding horse comes into view and reins in nearby. "There you are!" she says. "Dar Gremath said you might be around here somewhere. I've got an important message for you: The Iron Circle's army is getting ready to march against Albridge! Nazin Redthorn's called in all his raiding parties, and he's going to try to stomp us out once and for all. Dar Gremath's sent word for all the loyal Harkenwolders to come to Albridge and stand up to the Iron Circle. There's going to be a big battle! He asks you to hurry back to Albridge to help out, as quick as you can!"

The halfling is Seranna, granddaughter of Gerrad, the elder of Albridge. The battle is still two or three days off—it will take that long for the Iron Circle to finish assembling its forces. The heroes have time to march to Albridge from any corner of Harkenwold. Seranna urges the heroes to be on their way soon, but admits that they could leave in the morning if they need to rest first. Seranna has a number of other people she intends to visit in the next few hours, spreading word of the impending Iron Circle attack. If the party resists the summons, she visibly slumps in the saddle, says, "I hope you change your minds!" and gallops off—she has many miles still to ride.

Preparing for Battle

When the heroes arrive in the area of Albridge, they quickly encounter rebel pickets. As soon as they are identified, they are ushered to the main rebel encampment where Dar Gremath awaits them.

Read:

Dar Gremath is meeting with the other Harkenwold leaders in the empty barn of an abandoned farm when you arrive. He waves you over at once. "I'm glad you're here," he says. "We've got every free man or woman who can fight worth a lick from all the villages here, but the Iron Circle troops match our numbers. They've got better arms and armor, and most of them are trained soldiers. Still, with your help, we'll give them one hell of a battle. After all, we're fighting for our homes and livelihoods." The leaders gathered around nod grimly.

Skill Challenge: Battle Preparations

This is the first skill challenge of the adventure.

Before running it, you should review the rules for skill challenges that appear in the accompanying *Dungeon Master's Book*.

The adventurers' goal in this skill challenge is to get the Harkenwold rebels ready to fight!

Level: 3 (XP 625).

Complexity: 4 (requires 10 successes before 3 failures).

Primary Skills: Diplomacy, History, Intimidate, Nature, Religion.

Diplomacy (DC 13, 1 hour): A character can use Diplomacy to convince certain rebel factions to put themselves under Dar Gremath's overall command, to smooth personal rivalries and jealousies, or to persuade certain rebel bands to take on tasks that are particularly dangerous, difficult, or unpleasant. This skill can be used to achieve 3 successes in the challenge.

History (DC 11, 1 hour): A character can use History to identify relevant lessons from past wars, to apply broad rules of strategy to the rebels' circumstances, or to draw up plans for rudimentary defenses based on what other

ROLEPLAYING BEFORE THE BATTLE

This scene offers an excellent opportunity for the players to engage in roleplaying. Many of the major NPCs of Harkenwold—Dar Gremath, Reithann the druid, the elder Gerrad, Bran Torsson, and Willet Reedfoot of the White River halflings—are gathered here to lead the rebels in battle. Dar Gremath is comfortable in command and does not want to show any vacillation before the other leaders. His preferred style is to issue orders and have everyone jump. On the other hand, he is keen not to alienate his most potent force—the adventurers. At the very least, he wants to know what the heroes will be doing during the fighting.

Greetings. "You've already helped us a great deal, and you've shown you've got brains and courage. Give us your honest opinions? Can Redthorn be beat?"

What do you want us to do in the battle? "I want to hold you in reserve. You're my best fighters. Stay close by me early on, and if the Iron Circle breaks through anywhere, I'll send you in to stop them."

How can we help you get ready? "I need to pull this army together before tomorrow. We need a good plan, a good place to fight, and someone to draw our troops together and inspire them. You can help in all that."

people have done in the past. This skill can be used to gain 3 successes in the challenge.

Intimidate (DC 15, 1 hour): A character can use Intimidate to project self-confidence and competence, to challenge uncertain rebel leaders and push them to do better, or to reassure nervous rebels by making light of the threat posed by the Iron Circle attack. This skill can be used to gain 3 successes in the challenge.

Nature (DC 13, 1 hour): A character can use Nature to study potential battlegrounds, to anticipate weather conditions, or to supervise camouflage efforts. This skill can be used to achieve 3 successes in the challenge.

Religion (DC 13, 1 hour): A character can use Religion to conduct an invocation to the deities, to counsel fearful fighters, or to lead the Harkenwolders in seeking divine favor in the battle to come. This skill can be used to achieve 2 successes in the challenge.

Success: The adventurers aid in devising a sound plan that makes the best use of terrain and the forces available to Dar Gremath, and help the Harkenwolders to prepare for battle. They are awarded 2 victory points toward the outcome of the battle (see "Victory or Defeat," below), and they receive the full XP award for the skill challenge.

Failure: The battle plan and preparations are flawed. The adventurers can still win, but it's a tougher fight with

more casualties. No victory points are awarded, but the heroes receive the full XP award for the skill challenge.

Fighting the Battle

The heroes' part in the battle is represented by encounters B2, B3, and B4. Depending on the players' decisions about their characters' roles in the battle, these encounters might be waves of Iron Circle soldiers attacking their position, breakthroughs the adventurers are sent to seal off, or opposition standing between them and their goal. Here are examples:

- ◆ **Attack:** The adventurers choose a specific objective to seize or accomplish during the battle, such as confronting the enemy commander, leading rebel troops in an attack, or infiltrating the enemy camp to destroy supplies or take prisoners.
- ◆ **Defend:** The adventurers choose to protect something. They might guard Dar Gremath and his banner during the battle, protect a vulnerable flank or exposed position, or take a position at the head of the rebel army.
- ◆ **Reserve:** The adventurers are assigned the job of reacting to enemy moves or seizing opportunities that suddenly appear. For example, they might hang back to stem a Iron Circle breakthrough or wait until the





(Left to right) Iron Circle enforcer, dark adept, and brigand

fighting exposes an Iron Circle weakness so they can lead a counterattack. This is Dar Gremath's preference.

When the adventurers defeat Nazin or force him to retreat in encounter B4, or are defeated by the Iron Circle forces, the Battle of Albridge comes to an end. If the rebels win, the badly mauled Iron Circle troops flee the field. Most soldiers are hunted down and dealt with by vengeful rebels, but some stragglers make it back to Iron Keep and take refuge there. If the Iron Circle wins, the rebels retreat and scatter to the four winds.

Victory or Defeat

Success or failure in battle doesn't just depend on how well the adventurers fight in their own small part of the fray. It also depends on how successful they have been in their efforts against the Iron Circle. To determine how the battle turns out, assign **victory points** (VP) based on the heroes' accomplishments so far:

Reavers of Harkenwold Part 1: The Iron Circle

- 1 VP The heroes won encounter E2.
- 1 VP The heroes won encounter E3.
- 2 VP The heroes defeated Gloorpk in encounter T2.
- 2 VP The adventurers successfully forged an alliance with the Woodsinger elves.

Reavers of Harkenwold Part 2: The Die Is Cast

- 2 VP The heroes successfully aided the battle preparations in encounter B1.
- 1 VP The heroes won encounter B2.
- 1 VP The heroes won encounter B3.
- 2 VP The heroes won encounter B4.

The results of the battle are:

0-4 VP: A decisive defeat. Albridge is burned, the rebel army is largely destroyed, and Iron Keep remains at full strength (see "The Keep at Full Strength," page 12).

5-6 VP: A narrow defeat. Albridge is burned. The rebel army suffers heavy casualties but remains essentially intact as it retreats to Tor's Hold. Iron Keep is in its normal, depleted state (as described in encounters K1 through K7), with two active squads of reinforcements (see "The Keep at Full Strength," page 12).

7-9 VP: A narrow victory. Albridge is saved, and the rebel army remains intact and in position. Iron Keep is in its normal, depleted state (as described in encounters K1 through K7), with one active squad of reinforcements (see "The Keep at Full Strength," page 12).

10-12 VP: A decisive victory. Albridge and the rebel army are saved. Iron Keep is in its normal, depleted state, and no squads of reinforcements exist (see "The Keep at Full Strength," page 12).

ENCOUNTER B2: BATTLE OF ALBRIDGE, PART 1

Encounter Level 2 (710 XP)

Setup

1 Iron Circle enforcer (E)

1 spitting drake (S)

10 Iron Circle rabble (R)

This encounter takes place during the Battle of Albridge. It represents one short skirmish in the wider battle. Depending on the plans the players made in encounter B1, this combat can arise for any of the following reasons:

- ◆ **Attack:** While the adventurers are moving into position to strike at the Iron Circle leadership or outflank the Iron Circle forces, they stumble across an Iron Circle squad on the outskirts of the battle.
- ◆ **Defense:** Holding down an important position in the middle of the rebel lines, the heroes are responsible for defeating any enemies who come into their area of the battlefield. An Iron Circle squad approaches.
- ◆ **Reserve:** Waiting to see where they can do the most good, the adventurers spot a group of Iron Circle soldiers who break through the rebel lines or threaten to outflank the rebels, and move to intercept the enemy.

This encounter uses half of the “Stading” battle map. Have the players place their characters within the fieldstone wall surrounding the cottage. Place the Iron Circle forces as indicated, and then roll initiative.

Read:

The battle opens with a straightforward attack by the Iron Circle soldiers. Arrows and crossbow bolts fly as the two armies close. The Harkenwolders give ground, but their formation doesn't break. The battle becomes a desperate, swirling melee that sprawls over several farms and fields a little way south of the town. The area you're guarding is quiet at first, but then you spy a large band of Iron Circle soldiers heading in your direction, with a reptilian creature trotting at their side. They raise a warcry and charge at you!

Iron Circle Enforcer (E)		Level 2 Elite Brute
Medium natural humanoid, human		XP 250
HP 88; Bloodied 44		Initiative +2
AC 14, Fortitude 15, Reflex 14, Will 13		Perception +1
Speed 5		
Saving Throws +2; Action Points 1		
STANDARD ACTIONS		
⊕ Heavy Flail (weapon) ◆ At-Will		
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +7 vs. AC		
Hit: 2d6 + 6 damage.		
◀ Flail Sweep (weapon) ◆ Recharge when first bloodied		
Attack: Close burst 1 (creatures in burst); +5 vs. Fortitude		
Hit: 3d6 + 6 damage, and the target falls prone.		
TRIGGERED ACTIONS		
⊕ Smash Back (weapon) ◆ At-Will		
Trigger: An enemy hits the enforcer with a melee attack.		
Attack (Immediate Reaction): Melee 1 (triggering creature); +7 vs. AC		
Hit: 2d6 + 6 damage, and the enforcer gains a +2 bonus to attack rolls against the target until the end of its next turn.		
Skills Athletics +10, Intimidate +7		
Str 18 (+5)	Dex 12 (+2)	Wis 10 (+1)
Con 14 (+3)	Int 11 (+1)	Cha 13 (+2)
Alignment evil		Languages Common
Equipment chainmail, heavy flail, black surcoat embroidered with a red-trimmed gray circle		

Spitting Drake (S)		Level 3 Artillery
Medium natural beast (reptile)		XP 150
HP 38; Bloodied 19		Initiative +5
AC 17, Fortitude 14, Reflex 16, Will 14		Perception +3
Speed 7		
Resist 10 acid		
STANDARD ACTIONS		
⊕ Bite ◆ At-Will		
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +8 vs. AC		
Hit: 1d6 + 5 damage.		
⊗ Caustic Spit (acid) ◆ At-Will		
Attack: Ranged 10 (one creature); +8 vs. Reflex		
Hit: 2d6 + 4 acid damage.		
Str 14 (+3)	Dex 18 (+5)	Wis 14 (+3)
Con 14 (+3)	Int 3 (-3)	Cha 9 (+0)
Alignment unaligned		Languages –

10 Iron Circle Rabble (R)		Level 2 Minion Brute
Medium natural humanoid, human		XP 31 each
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.		Initiative +1
AC 16, Fortitude 15, Reflex 13, Will 13		Perception +1
Speed 6		
TRAITS		
Mob Rule		
The rabble gains a +2 power bonus to all defenses while adjacent to two or more allies.		
STANDARD ACTIONS		
⊕ Mace (weapon) ◆ At-Will		
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +7 vs. AC		
Hit: 5 damage.		
Str 14 (+3)	Dex 10 (+1)	Wis 10 (+1)
Con 12 (+2)	Int 9 (+0)	Cha 9 (+0)
Alignment evil		Languages Common
Equipment mace, black cloak embroidered with a gray circle		

Tactics

The Iron Circle soldiers are confident in their numbers. They begin the battle with a reckless rush, hoping to overwhelm the heroes. The rabble try to gang up on a couple of enemies at a time to make good use of flanking and their *mob rule* trait.

The enforcer closes to melee as quickly as possible. She moves into squares from which she can threaten two or more characters and make good use of *flail sweep*. The enforcer waits to spend her action point until the round after she's made a successful *smash back* attack. That way she can make two attacks with the bonus provided by *smash back*.

The spitting drake skulks around the edges of the fight, keeping its distance from any characters trying to bring it to melee. It uses *caustic spit* against any target that seems convenient, but it's especially likely to retaliate against enemies who hurt it in previous rounds.

Features of the Area

Illumination: Bright light—this encounter takes place during daylight.

Doors: The doors to the cottage and outbuildings are sturdy wood (DC 16 Strength check to break down; AC 5, Reflex 5, Fortitude 10, 20 hp).

Embankment: This steep, dirt road embankment is difficult terrain.

Furnishings: The furniture is lightly built and offers no impediment to movement—a moving character simply kicks the furnishings aside. Furnishings can be used as improvised weapons. A bed or table flipped on its side (a standard action) becomes a low wall, providing cover against attacks crossing it.

Tree: The square occupied by the tree's trunk is impassable but provides cover. Climbing the tree requires a DC 10 Athletics check, and a creature up the tree gains concealment.

Wall: The fieldstone wall stands 4 feet high and provides cover against attacks that cross it. It costs 2 squares of movement to cross the wall.

Well: This 15-foot-deep well is surrounded by a low stone wall (+2 bonus to the saving throw to catch yourself). Climbing out of the well is difficult (DC 20 Athletics check).

Windows: Creatures firing through the windows of the cottage have cover against attacks from the outside.



A SHORT REST FOR THE WEARY

Encounters B2, B3, and B4 all take place during the Battle of Albridge, as the heroes do their part to help the assembled Harkenwolders against the Iron Circle's large war band. The encounters assume that the adventurers will be able to take a short rest between each one, refreshing their encounter powers and spending healing surges as needed. During these brief downtimes, the adventurers might be waiting for the next group of enemies to appear, talking tactics with Dar Gremath or the other Harkenwold leaders, biding their time as a reserve force to be thrown into the most desperate part of the fighting, or taking a short breather behind the lines. The Battle of Albridge encounters become much harder if you don't allow the characters to take a short rest between each one.

ENCOUNTER B3: BATTLE OF ALBRIDGE, PART 2

Encounter Level 3 (750 XP)

Setup

- 1 Iron Circle dark adept (A)
- 2 Iron Circle cutthroats (C)
- 2 tar devil guards (T)

This encounter takes place during the Battle of Albridge. It represents a major skirmish. Depending on the plans the players made in encounter B1, this combat can arise for any of the following reasons:

- ◆ **Attack:** The adventurers encounter an Iron Circle rearguard as they get close to their goal. They'll have to fight their way through the force.
- ◆ **Defense:** The battle flows away from the heroes after their first encounter. Soon thereafter, they spy a band of Iron Circle marauders burning farmhouses nearby. The adventurers advance to confront them.
- ◆ **Reserve:** Dar Gremath (or another Harkenwold contact) sends word by messenger that the adventurers are urgently needed on the other side of the battle. A force of Iron Circle devils and soldiers bars the way.

Lay out the "Steading" battle map as shown, with the farms and fields half face-up.

When the battle starts, read:

A young Harkenwolder gallops up to you on horseback. "Dar Gremath says he needs your help over by the Radden farmstead!" he pants, pointing across the battlefield. A couple of hundred yards away, you can make out the rebel leader's banner, now under attack. Between you and Dar Gremath, a band of marauding soldiers is busy setting fire to farmhouses and killing off any wounded they come across. Some of the Iron Circle warriors aren't human—they're short, scaly creatures with black horns and lashing tails, surrounded in dark fumes. The messenger gallops off again, leaving matters in your hands.

Have the players place their characters anywhere along the north edge of the map, then place the Iron Circle forces where indicated.

Iron Circle Dark Adept (A)		Level 3 Controller (Leader)
Medium natural humanoid, human		XP 150
HP 46; Bloodied 23		Initiative +2
AC 17, Fortitude 14, Reflex 14, Will 16		Perception +5
Speed 6		
STANDARD ACTIONS		
Ⓜ Dark Dagger (fire, weapon) ◆ At-Will		
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +6 vs. Reflex		
Hit: 2d4 + 4 fire damage, and the dark adept slides the target 3 squares.		
⚡ Fiery Tendrils (fire) ◆ At-Will		
Attack: Area burst 1 within 10 (creatures in burst); +6 vs. Reflex		
Hit: 1d6 + 6 fire damage, and the target is slowed and grants combat advantage until the end of the dark adept's next turn.		
MINOR ACTIONS		
◀ Dark Imperative (healing, necrotic) ◆ Recharge when bloodied		
Effect: Close burst 5 (one ally in burst). The dark adept slides the target 3 squares, and the target gains 10 temporary hit points. While the target has these temporary hit points, its melee attacks deal 3 extra necrotic damage.		
Skills Arcana +8, Religion +8		
Str 13 (+2)	Dex 12 (+2)	Wis 18 (+5)
Con 14 (+3)	Int 15 (+3)	Cha 13 (+2)
Alignment evil		Languages Common
Equipment chainmail, dagger, red surcoat with gold-trimmed black circle		

2 Iron Circle Cutthroats (C)		Level 2 Skirmisher
Medium natural humanoid, human		XP 125 each
HP 37; Bloodied 18		Initiative +6
AC 16, Fortitude 12, Reflex 14, Will 12		Perception +1
Speed 6		
TRAITS		
Shadow Stride		
If the cutthroat moves at least 3 squares from its starting position on its turn, it gains concealment until the start of its next turn.		
STANDARD ACTIONS		
Ⓜ Short Sword (weapon) ◆ At-Will		
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +7 vs. AC		
Hit: 1d6 + 4 damage (or 2d6 + 4 if the cutthroat has combat advantage against the target).		
⚡ Hand Crossbow (weapon) ◆ At-Will		
Attack: Ranged 10/20 (one creature); +7 vs. AC		
Hit: 1d6 + 3 damage.		
MINOR ACTIONS		
Ⓜ Slasher's Feint ◆ At-Will (1/round)		
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +5 vs. Reflex		
Hit: The cutthroat gains combat advantage against the target until the end of its current turn.		
Str 12 (+2)	Dex 17 (+4)	Wis 11 (+1)
Con 13 (+2)	Int 10 (+1)	Cha 12 (+2)
Alignment evil		Languages Common
Equipment leather armor, short sword, hand crossbow, 20 bolts, black cloak embroidered with a gray circle		

2 Tar Devil Guards (T)

Medium immortal humanoid (devil)

Level 4 Soldier

XP 175 each

HP 53; Bloodied 26

Initiative +5

AC 20, Fortitude 17, Reflex 15, Will 16

Perception +7

Speed 6

Darkvision

Resist 10 fire; Vulnerable 5 acid

TRAITS

☼ **Hot Reek** (fire) ◆ **Aura 1**

An enemy that starts its turn within the aura takes 2 fire damage and cannot shift on its current turn.

STANDARD ACTIONS

⊕ **Khopesh** (weapon) ◆ **At-Will**

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +9 vs. AC

Hit: 1d8 + 7 damage.

MINOR ACTIONS

➤ **Tarry Net** (fire) ◆ **Recharge** if no creature is restrained by the net at the start of the devil's turn

Attack: Ranged 5 (one creature); +7 vs. Reflex

Hit: 1d6 + 4 fire damage, the target is restrained (save ends), and the devil pulls the target 5 squares to the nearest adjacent square.

Str 12 (+3)

Dex 17 (+5)

Wis 11 (+2)

Con 13 (+3)

Int 10 (+2)

Cha 12 (+3)

Alignment evil

Languages Supernal

Equipment khopesh, net

Tactics

The tar devils begin the battle by moving within 5 squares of their foes, using *tarry net*, and dragging restrained foes within reach of their khopeshes. If a tarry devil misses with its net, it instead uses its remaining action to charge, hopefully catching as many foes as possible in its *hot reek* aura.

The cutthroats use *shadow stride* to gain concealment and *slasher's feint* to gain combat advantage before attacking with their short swords.

The dark adept pays little attention to the cutthroats, instead reserving its *dark imperative* for the tar devils when they become injured. Otherwise he stays at range and uses *fiery tendrils* against the heroes, especially those who are giving the tar devils a tough time.

Features of the Area

Illumination: Bright light—this encounter takes place during daylight.

Doors: The doors to the cottages are sturdy wood (DC 16 Strength check to break down; AC 5, Reflex 5, Fortitude 10, 20 hp).

Embankment: This dirt road embankment is difficult terrain.

Furnishings: The furniture in the cottages is lightly built and offers no impediment to movement—a moving character simply kicks the furnishings aside. Furnishings can be used as improvised weapons. A bed or table flipped on its side (a standard action) becomes a low wall, providing cover against attacks crossing it.

Garden: These squares are difficult terrain.

Trees: Squares occupied by tree trunks are impassable but provide cover. Climbing a tree requires a



DC 10 Athletics check, and a creature up a tree gains concealment.

Wall: The fieldstone wall stands 4 feet high and provides cover against attacks that cross it. It costs 2 squares of movement to cross the wall.

Well: This 15-foot-deep well is surrounded by a low stone wall (+2 bonus to the saving throw to catch yourself). Climbing out of the well is difficult (DC 20 Athletics check).

Windows: Creatures firing through the windows of one of the cottages have cover against attacks from the outside.

ENCOUNTER B4: BATTLE OF ALBRIDGE, CLIMAX

Encounter Level 5 (1,048 XP)

Setup

Nazin Redthorn (N)
2 tar devil harriers (T)
8 Iron Circle rabble (R)
1 horse (H)

Frustrated by the adventurers' interference in his plans and the reversals of the battle, the Iron Circle leader, Nazin Redthorn, leads an attack against the party. Alternatively, if your players created a battle plan to attack Redthorn, you can instead launch this encounter as the successful fruition of their earlier efforts.

Lay out the "Steading" battle map; this encounter uses the whole map. Have the players place their characters in the vicinity of the X, then place the Iron Circle forces as indicated and roll initiative.

Read:

Only minutes after you finish with your last foes, you hear a roar of challenge. Another group of Iron Circle soldiers is advancing on you. They are supported by two scaly humanoid creatures with horns and tails, with dripping globs of burning pitch in their taloned hands. With the band rides a massively muscled human warrior in scale armor. A standard flies from a holder at his stirrup—a black pennant with a red- and gold-trimmed gray ring in the center. "You!" the enemy lord cries. "You are the ones who have caused me so much trouble! Know now that you face Lord Nazin Redthorn, champion of the Iron Circle. With your deaths my victory is assured!"

8 Iron Circle Rabble (R)	Level 2 Minion Brute
Medium natural humanoid, human	XP 31 each
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.	Initiative +1
AC 16, Fortitude 15, Reflex 13, Will 13	Perception +1
Speed 6	
TRAITS	
Mob Rule	
The rabble gains a +2 power bonus to all defenses while adjacent to two or more allies.	
STANDARD ACTIONS	
⊕ Mace (weapon) ♦ At-Will	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +7 vs. AC	
Hit: 5 damage.	
Str 14 (+3)	Dex 10 (+1) Wis 10 (+1)
Con 12 (+2)	Int 9 (+0) Cha 9 (+0)
Alignment evil	Languages Common
Equipment mace, black cloak embroidered with a gray circle	

Nazin Redthorn (N)	Level 5 Elite Soldier (Leader)
Medium natural humanoid, human	XP 400
HP 126; Bloodied 63	Initiative +4
AC 21, Fortitude 19, Reflex 16, Will 17	Perception +3
Speed 5	
Saving Throws +2; Action Points 1	
STANDARD ACTIONS	
⊕ Triple-Headed Flail (weapon) ♦ At-Will	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +10 vs. AC	
Hit: 1d10 + 5 damage.	
⊕ Wolf Pack Tactics (weapon) ♦ At-Will	
Effect: Before the attack, one ally adjacent to Nazin or the target shifts 1 square as a free action.	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +10 vs. AC	
Hit: 1d10 + 5 damage.	
⊕ Warlord's Strike (weapon) ♦ Recharge ☼ ☼	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +10 vs. AC	
Hit: 2d10 + 5 damage, and an ally within 5 squares of Nazin gains a +4 bonus to damage rolls against the target until the end of Nazin's next turn.	
⊖ Infernal Flames (fire, healing) ♦ Recharge when first bloodied	
Attack: Close burst 5 (enemies in burst); +8 vs. Reflex	
Hit: 2d6 + 5 fire damage, and the target is dazed (save ends).	
Effect: Each ally in the burst regains 10 hit points.	
TRIGGERED ACTIONS	
⊕ Tripping Flail (weapon) ♦ At-Will	
Trigger: An enemy misses Nazin with an attack.	
Attack (Immediate Reaction): Melee 1 (triggering enemy); +8 vs. Fortitude	
Hit: 1d10 + 6 damage, and the target falls prone.	
Skills Athletics +12, Intimidate +9	
Str 20 (+7)	Dex 10 (+2) Wis 13 (+3)
Con 15 (+4)	Int 15 (+4) Cha 16 (+5)
Alignment evil	Languages Common, Giant, Supernal
Equipment scale armor, heavy shield, triple-headed flail, black surcoat embroidered with a red- and gold-trimmed gray circle	

2 Tar Devil Harriers (T)	Level 3 Artillery
Medium immortal humanoid (devil)	XP 150 each
HP 36; Bloodied 18	Initiative +5
AC 17, Fortitude 15, Reflex 15, Will 14	Perception +8
Speed 6	Darkvision
Resist 10 fire; Vulnerable 5 acid	
STANDARD ACTIONS	
⊕ Kukri (weapon) ♦ At-Will	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +8 vs. AC	
Hit: 1d6 + 5 damage.	
⊕ Tar Ball (fire) ♦ At-Will	
Attack: Ranged 10 (one creature); +8 vs. Reflex	
Hit: 2d6 + 4 fire damage, and the target is slowed and takes ongoing 2 fire damage (save ends).	
MINOR ACTIONS	
⊖ Fuming Cloud (fire, zone) ♦ Encounter	
Attack: Close burst 1 (creatures in burst); +6 vs. Fortitude	
Hit: 1d6 + 4 fire damage.	
Effect: The burst becomes a zone that lasts until the end of the encounter. Creatures in the zone gain concealment, and any creature ending its turn in the zone takes 2 fire damage. Squares within the zone are difficult terrain.	
Str 15 (+3)	Dex 18 (+5) Wis 14 (+3)
Con 12 (+2)	Int 11 (+1) Cha 11 (+1)
Alignment evil	Languages Supernal
Equipment kukri	

Horse (H)	Level 1 Brute	
Large natural beast (mount)	XP 100	
HP 36; Bloodied 18	Initiative +1	
AC 15, Fortitude 15, Reflex 13, Will 10	Perception +5	
Speed 10	Low-light vision	
TRAITS		
Charger (mount)		
The horse grants its rider a +5 bonus to damage rolls on charge attacks.		
STANDARD ACTIONS		
⊕ Kick ⊕ At-Will		
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +6 vs. AC		
Hit: 1d6 + 4 damage.		
⊕ Trample ⊕ At-Will		
Effect: The horse can move up to its speed and enter enemies' spaces. The movement provokes opportunity attacks, and the horse must end its move in an unoccupied space. When it enters an enemy's space, the horse makes a melee attack (+4 vs. Reflex). If the attack hits, the target takes 1d6 + 4 damage and falls prone.		
Str 19 (+4)	Dex 13 (+1)	Wis 11 (+0)
Con 16 (+3)	Int 2 (-4)	Cha 9 (-1)
Alignment unaligned Languages —		

Tactics

Nazin dismounts and fights on foot, leaving his horse in the rear with a single Iron Circle rabble to guard it. Nazin leads the initial rush against the adventurers and fights furiously, using *warlord's strike* as often as it recharges. He tries to hold off on *infernal flames* until at least one of the tar devils needs healing, but he'll use it earlier in the fight if he has the opportunity to attack multiple foes at once.

The remaining rabble rush forward to melee as quickly as possible. The tar devil harriers stay at range, hurling *tar balls* at different targets each round to make sure as many characters as possible are slowed.

Nazin's Getaway: When he is bloodied, the rabble are dead, or the tar devils are defeated, Nazin attempts to escape. He shifts or moves away from his opponent toward his horse, mounts (a move action), and rides off at the next opportunity. He saves his action point for use in this getaway attempt. Once he's mounted, he gallops off at speed 12, which should quickly get him away from heroes on foot.

Nazin's escape is important to set up the final conflict in Iron Keep. Make every attempt to have him flee, but if the tides of battle make it impossible, don't railroad the storyline to make it happen. You can replace Nazin in encounter K7 with a "second-in-command" for the heroes to fight.



ENCOUNTER B4: BATTLE OF ALBRIDGE, CLIMAX

Features of the Area

Illumination: Bright light—this encounter takes place during daylight.

Doors: The doors to buildings are sturdy wood (DC 16 Strength check to break down; AC 5, Reflex 5, Fortitude 10, and 20 hp).

Embankments: The dirt road embankments are difficult terrain.

Gardens: These squares are difficult terrain.

Trees: Squares occupied by tree trunks are impassable but provide cover. Climbing a tree requires a DC 10 Athletics check, and a creature up a tree gains concealment.

Walls: The fieldstone walls stand 4 feet high and provide cover against attacks that cross them. It costs 2 squares of movement to traverse a wall.

Wells: Each of these 15-foot-deep wells is surrounded by a low stone wall (+2 bonus to the saving throw to catch oneself). Climbing out of the well is difficult (DC 20 Athletics check).

Windows: Creatures firing through the windows of one of the cottages have cover against attacks from the outside.

IRON KEEP

Iron Keep (the renamed Harken Keep) is the stronghold of Nazin Redthorn and his Iron Circle soldiers. It stands on top of a short, steep-sided hillock overlooking Harken Village and the King's Road. The trees and ground cover on the hillside are cut back at least 100 feet from the walls, leaving a bare grassy slope. The hill rises precipitously on the eastern side. The other approaches are more gradual, but none flatten out until about 100 feet above the village. A causeway of hard-packed dirt climbs around the hilltop to the castle's front gate, exposed to archery fire from the towers and walls for most of its length.

Soldiers built the great tower and upper bailey 200 years ago to guard the King's Road and the White River valley against monsters attacking from Thunderspire or the Dawnforge Mountains. When Jonn Stockmer became baron 45 years ago, he embarked on a decades-long rebuilding and expansion of the stronghold, adding the lower bailey and repairing the rest of the castle (sorely needed at the time). Old Kellar from Harken was the chief stonemason of this work, and knows the castle like the back of his gnarled hands.

Iron Keep Characteristics

Illumination: Bright light during the day. At night, lanterns dimly light the courtyards and brightly illuminate interior areas.

Battlements: Creatures adjacent to battlements gain cover against attacks crossing the battlements. Battlements do not face the interior, and the wall tops are unprotected against attacks from inside the castle. Each of the towers and the keep is topped by a rooftop battlement.

Ceilings: Interior rooms have ceilings of 15 feet unless noted otherwise.

Doors: The interior doors in the castle are thick, iron-reinforced oak (DC 18 Strength check to break down if locked, DC 22 if barred). The front gate and postern gate aren't normal doors—they're built to stand up to siege engines, at least for a short time. They cannot be broken down by a Strength check.

Locked doors can be opened with a DC 20 Thievery check. Assume that the monsters in the encounter area closest to the door also have a key to open it. In addition, Nazin Redthorn has a master key ring that opens all locks in the castle (he leaves it behind when he marches to do battle at Albridge).

Elevation: All first level areas inside the castle are 10 feet above the ground level outside the walls. Embra-
sure sills on the first floor are roughly 12 feet above the ground.

Embrasures: Most of the castle's "windows" are arrow slits, only about 6 inches wide. Creatures adjacent to an embrasure have superior cover against attacks through the opening. A Small character can squeeze through an embrasure with a DC 21 Acrobatics check.

Roofs: The tower roofs are 40 feet above the ground outside; the keep roof is 60 feet above the ground outside.

Walls and Floors: The walls are well-made masonry (DC 20 Athletics check to climb). The battlements encircling the castle are 25 feet above the ground level outside, and 15 feet above the courtyards inside. Interior floors are flagstone; the interior courtyards are hard-packed dirt with flagstone paths.

Getting Inside

The first challenge the heroes face is getting inside Iron Keep. Clever players might devise a ploy to enter, such as feigning surrender, hiding in supply wagons, or donning disguises. Encounter K1 (page 16) addresses skill challenges that might result given some of the more likely approaches.

More direct players could look for approaches that go over or through the walls. The keep is guarded by a number of sentries who try to prevent this, and they raise the alarm if attacked (see "Raising the Alarm," page 14). Encounter K2 (page 18) covers the wall defense if the heroes attack the sentries.

Finally, the heroes might try a frontal assault on the front gate and outer bailey. Such a plan leads to encounter K3 (page 20). This hard fight (especially if the heroes attack early in the adventure) might be pulled off by a tough and aggressive group.

THE KEEP AT FULL STRENGTH

The area descriptions and encounters in Iron Keep assume that the players follow the most likely course in the adventure—waiting to attack the keep until the rebels have broken the Iron Circle's strength in the Battle of Albridge. If the heroes attack the keep before that battle, a great deal more Iron Circle soldiers are present. Add the following squad of reinforcements to each of the following areas: 3, 5, 6, 14, and 27.

Level 3 Encounter (XP 755)

- ◆ 1 Iron Circle dark adept (level 3 controller, page 8)
- ◆ 2 Iron Circle guards (level 3 soldier, page 20)
- ◆ 5 Iron Circle rabble (level 2 minion brute, page 6)
- ◆ 1 iron defender (level 3 soldier, page 21)

IRON KEEP

One square = 5 feet



3rd Floor



2nd Floor



1st Floor

Iron Keep Key

Locations marked on the Iron Keep map include:

1. Road. The road approaching the castle is closely watched. If approaching characters appear to have business at the castle (as opposed to running up with weapons drawn), they won't be fired on immediately.

2. The Gatehouse (Encounter K3). The doors of the gatehouse are made of iron plate riveted to iron frames. They are normally closed but include 6-inch-wide spyholes at head height so guards inside can see who's outside. An iron portcullis is positioned to drop at the top of the first set of stairs.

The gate commander, a tiefling named Sturmik, inhabits the gatehouse's lower chamber. Sturmik is a spiteful, grasping martinet who closely questions anyone seeking entrance.

3. West Tower (Encounter K3). This tower is part of the gate's defenses. The lower floor is a storeroom, the upper floor a barracks. See "The Keep at Full Strength," page 12.

4. Lower Bailey (Encounter K3). The lower bailey is exposed to the view of sentries on the wall tops. As long as no alarm has been raised, they don't react to adventurers in the courtyard unless the heroes are attacking or acting suspiciously. Characters approaching the gatehouse (area 2) will be challenged by the guards in that area.

5. Banquet Hall. In better days, Baron Stockmer was fond of entertaining guests in this grand hall. On days without revels, the area serves as the garrison's mess hall and off-duty tavern. The walls are decorated with heraldic shields, representing noble families who are related

or allied to Baron Stockmer. An ugly new banner—a black background embroidered with a red- and gold-trimmed gray circle—hangs over the Stockmer coat of arms in the place of honor. This area is currently unmanned (see "The Keep at Full Strength," page 12).

6. Lower Bailey Barracks. This barracks room is empty (see "The Keep at Full Strength," page 12).

7. Well Room. This small building protects one of the castle's two wells. The door is normally unlocked. The well is about 20 feet deep, filled by a natural spring in the hillside.

8. Red Tower (Encounter K3). Named for the slightly red hue of its stone, this tower is currently occupied by a pair of iron defenders that help guard the outer bailey.

9. Bailey Gate. This passage can be closed with a portcullis that swings shut and locks in place with iron bolts (DC 28 Strength check to wrench open; DC 21 Thievery check to unlock; AC 5, Reflex 5, Fortitude 10, 40 hp). The portcullis normally stands open.

10. Upper Bailey. The castle's inner courtyard is a large open space. A small well stands in front of the chapel door, and a number of small apple trees provide a pleasant bit of shade in warm weather. The trees obscure the wall sentries' view of the courtyard, so they don't notice heroes who are moving about with reasonable caution. A fight draws their attention.

11. North Tower. The upper floor of this tower is an empty barracks; the lower floor is used as a storeroom. A secret passage (DC 20 Perception check to locate) leads outside the wall from the lower floor of the tower. None of the Iron Circle soldiers know about it, but Old Kellar in Harken tells the heroes about it if he gets the chance. The secret door can't be opened from outside, but a stealthy character could sneak over the wall and into the tower to open it from within.

12. Stables. Two horses are stabled here. If Nazin survived encounter B4, one of the horses is his.

13. Servant Quarters. This simple bunkroom sleeps a dozen castle servants. They are locked in here when they're not at work. The domestics are all Stockmer retainers who've been enslaved by the Iron Circle. Their leader is a plucky but badly beaten human valet named Maroth.

The servants are cowed by Nazin's warriors but are willing to help the heroes as much as they can without fighting. Given the chance, they take advantage of the heroes' presence to escape the castle. They can tell the heroes that Nazin lives in the top floor of the keep, Baron Stockmer is imprisoned in the gaol, and "foul fiends haunt the chapel."

14. Upper Bailey Barracks. This barracks room is empty (see "The Keep at Full Strength," page 12).

15. Kitchen. From an hour before sunup to midnight, five retainers from area 13 prepare food and clean pots and pans here. The chief cook is an old dwarf named Kergud. He resents the Iron Circle and can tell the heroes the same things as Maroth (area 13). The stairs lead to well-stocked cellars holding flour, salted meat, ale, and

RAISING THE ALARM

Iron Keep has two states: normal (as described in encounters K1 through K7) and alert. The heroes could set off the alarm if they fail to silence a wall top sentry before it takes a second turn in a fight, allow a villain to escape from an encounter, or otherwise cause a great deal of noise. If the party takes a short rest after any of these events occur, the keep goes on alert and stays there for 1 hour.

An alert keep probably spells doom for a party that stays and fights. You'll have to judge how dangerous to make the situation. Overall suggestions for the keep's alert status follow.

Sentries remain at their stations, shooting at invaders if able. The denizens of the gatehouse (encounter K3) also stay put. Kaltis and her devils (encounter K4) respond as quickly as they can.

The guards in the Great Tower (encounters K5, K6, and K7) close the drawbridge and lock the doors leading to the wall tops. Nazin gathers as much information about the situation as he can, then sorties out with the Great Tower force unless he's convinced that defense is the wisest option.

other provisions. If the adventurers need a safe place to rest, Kergud and the other servants point them to a spot in the cellars below.

16. Desecrated Chapel (Encounter K4). Formerly dedicated to Bahamut, Kord, and Erathis, the chapel has been defiled in favor of Asmodeus. An evil cleric named Kaltis lairs here now, and a large brass shield worked with the triple-triangle holy symbol of Asmodeus hangs above an altar covered in a scarlet cloth and black candles.

17. Wizard's Tower. A foul-tempered, imperious old wizard named Malkos normally inhabits this tower, but Nazin sent Malkos and his lackeys to the city of Sarthel to update Lord Vhennyk on the Iron Circle's campaign in Harkenwold. The lower floor is a cluttered alchemical laboratory; the upper floor is where Malkos normally sleeps and keeps his small library.

18. Great Tower Drawbridge (Encounter K5). The main entrance to the keep is on the second floor, 15 feet above the ground. A flight of stone steps leads up to a landing and then across a small drawbridge to area 23 in the keep. The drawbridge is normally down.

19. Great Tower Kitchen (Encounter K6). Six servants handle the cooking and domestic work of the tower, sleeping in the kitchen. A stout, middle-aged halfling housekeeper named Thanis does her best to keep the kitchen and tower in order, hoping to avert Nazin's wrath.

20. Great Tower Lower Barracks (Encounter K6). The soldiers responsible for guarding the gaol bunk in this room.

21. Postern Gate. This small but sturdy locked door is made of iron plate (DC 25 Strength check to force open; DC 25 Thievery check to unlock; AC 5, Reflex 5, Fortitude 10, 60 hit points). Nazin keeps the key. The postern provides the Great Tower's defenders with a way to sortie against attacking forces. Steep bluffs fall away from the castle on its eastern side, so the postern is safe against heavy attack by enemy forces.

22. Gaol (Encounter K6). The tower has cells for only a few prisoners at a time. Several Iron Circle soldiers stand here, keeping an eye on Baron Jonn Stockmer, who is imprisoned in the eastern cell.

Baron Stockmer is a hale fellow of 65 years, a former adventurer who's stood up to weeks of deprivation and abuse with courage. Despite his unbroken spirit, he is sick and too weak to walk. He urges rescuers to press on and defeat Nazin instead of wasting time on spiriting him out of the castle. If asked about the castle, Stockmer tells the heroes about the secret staircase leading from area 26 to area 30.

23. Foyer (Encounter K5). The drawbridge from the landing at area 18 leads into this antechamber. A large force of Iron Circle guards defends this floor of the Great Tower. The room is decorated with ornamental weapons on the walls.

24. Great Tower Barracks (Encounter K5). Iron Circle soldiers bunk in this room.

25. Bodyguard Quarters. Nazin's personal guards (the hobgoblins in encounter K7) sleep in this small bunkroom when they are not guarding their master.

26. Lord's Hall (Encounter K5). This richly decorated hall features fine tapestries along the walls. Nazin takes most of his meals here and holds court for several hours a day. If the heroes attack the keep in the middle of the day, he is likely to be here, surrounded by guards. A secret staircase (DC 20 Perception check to locate) leads up to area 30. Nazin and Stockmer know about the secret passage, but no one else does.

27. Upper Foyer (Encounter K7). This small area serves as the antechamber to the castle's master suite. See "The Keep at Full Strength," page 12.

28. Library. This room is the tower's library. Most of the volumes are atlases and histories—interesting, but not particularly valuable.

29. Chamberlain's Room. This comfortable bedroom is reserved for the castle's chamberlain. It currently serves as the quarters for the dark adept who attends Nazin.

30. Lord's Chambers (Encounter K7). Formerly the residence of Baron Stockmer, this spacious suite is now in the possession of Nazin Redthorn and his bodyguards. A secret staircase leads down to area 26.

The small rooms include a treasury with a locked door (DC 20 Thievery check to unlock; Nazin has the key) and a bathroom with a fine bathtub.



Tar devil

ENCOUNTER K1: INFILTRATING THE KEEP

To rescue Baron Stockmer and defeat the Iron Circle in Harkenwold, the adventurers must find a way to get into Iron Keep—a heavily defended castle surrounded by daunting battlements and high walls.

So how does the party get inside? The most perilous option is to storm the castle. The party might attempt to scale the walls (encounter K2), fight their way through the front gate (encounter K3), or slip in through the postern gate (area 21). If the adventurers speak to Old Kellar in the village of Harken, the dwarf can direct them to the secret passage leading into the North Tower (area 11), but warns them that the door must be opened from within.

A skill challenge can be used if the heroes attempt to bluff their way into the castle. The following suggestions cover the characters posing as new recruits, pretending to be Iron Circle soldiers, or smuggling themselves inside. Another approach is surrender.

If your players surprise you by coming up with something completely off the wall—for example, pretending to be circus performers who want to put on a show for the evil overlord—use the strategy listed below that most closely matches their idea as a framework. In the case of the circus idea, the “New Recruits” skill challenge is the closest. It’s about the heroes disguising themselves as something they’re not and trying to win the villains’ confidence.

Skill Challenge: New Recruits

The heroes approach Iron Keep as “mercenaries” looking for work. Sturmik, the tiefling who commands the gatehouse, isn’t sure he believes that the heroes are who they say they are.

Read:

The captain of the gatehouse steps out onto the parapet and leans down to look you over. He’s a tiefling clad in a black surplice embroidered with a gold-trimmed gray ring. “So you think you’re Iron Circle material?” he sneers. “I’m not so sure I like the looks of you. Tell me why I shouldn’t drive you away from the gate like beggars.”

Level: 3 (XP 625).

Complexity: 3 (requires 8 successes before 3 failures).

Primary Skills: Bluff, History, Insight, Streetwise.

Bluff (opposed by Sturmik’s *Insight* check, 1 minute): A character can use Bluff to create a plausible mercenary alter ego, make a claim of great skill or ruthlessness, or tell tales about past exploits. Sturmik has a +11 bonus to his *Insight* check. This skill can be used to achieve unlimited successes in the challenge. However, each failed Bluff check imposes a cumulative –2 penalty on all future Bluff checks made as part of this challenge.

History (DC 15, 1 minute): A character can use History to feign first-hand knowledge of other brigands and sellswords, convincing Sturmik that he’s ridden with other well-known mercenaries. This skill can be used to achieve 3 successes in the challenge.

Insight (DC 13, 1 minute): A character can use Insight to observe which claims impress Sturmik and which ones raise his suspicions, and guide the discussion in new directions as necessary. This skill can be used to achieve 3 successes in the challenge.

Streetwise (DC 13, 1 minute): A character can use Streetwise to offer a modest bribe (not unusual for joining successful companies) or to suggest future cooperation in plundering Harkenwold. This skill can be used to gain 3 successes in the challenge.

Success: Sturmik allows the party to enter. He assigns two of the human guards from the gatehouse to lead the heroes to the barracks room in area 6. Sturmik also sends word to Nazin Redthorn that new recruits are awaiting his inspection. The gatehouse guards remain to keep an eye on the party and see them settled. In an hour or two, Nazin and his retinue (the villains in encounter K7) come down to the banquet hall to look things over. If the party met Nazin in the battle of Albridge, the fight is on!

Failure: Sturmik sees through the heroes’ ruse and orders the guards to open fire. Proceed with encounter K3 (page 20). The party receives no XP award for the skill challenge.

Skill Challenge: Iron Circle Poseurs

The heroes equip themselves with tunics and cloaks taken from Iron Circle soldiers they’ve defeated, and pose as a patrol returning to the castle. Sturmik, the tiefling who commands the gatehouse, is suspicious because he doesn’t recognize any of the “soldiers.”

Read:

Before the gate opens, a harsh voice rings out from the gatehouse. “I don’t remember any of you. Who is your sergeant? Where did you say you were coming from?”

Level: 3 (XP 625).

Complexity: 3 (requires 8 successes before 3 failures).

Primary Skills: Bluff, Intimidate, Stealth, Streetwise.

Bluff (opposed by *Sturmik's Insight check, 1 minute*): A character can use Bluff to persuade *Sturmik* that they're just soldiers he hasn't met yet, to flatter *Sturmik*, or fast-talk around questions she doesn't know the answer to. *Sturmik* has a +11 bonus to his *Insight* check. This skill can be used to achieve unlimited successes in the challenge. However, each failed Bluff check imposes a cumulative -2 penalty on all future Bluff checks made as part of this challenge.

Intimidate (DC 16, 1 minute): A character can use Intimidate to threaten *Sturmik* with retaliation for wasting time, or to unleash a torrent of profanity to demonstrate impatience. This skill can be used to achieve 3 successes in the challenge.

Stealth (DC 21, standard action): Most Iron Circle soldiers are humans, with only a few tieflings and other races. A nonhuman character can use Stealth to "blend in," avoiding notice. This skill can be used to gain 1 skill challenge success per nonhuman in the party.

Streetwise (DC 13, 1 minute): A character can use Streetwise to engage in soldierly camaraderie, lighten the mood with a wisecrack, or suggest to *Sturmik* that good loot is ready for divvying up if he stops hassling "the patrol." This skill can be used to achieve 3 successes in the skill challenge.

Success: *Sturmik* orders the gate opened and allows the party to enter. They can go where they like without being challenged, except the gaol (area 22) and *Nazin's* chambers (areas 27-30). Even so, suspicious actions are likely to provoke attack.

Failure: *Sturmik* sees through the heroes' ruse and orders his soldiers to attack. Proceed with encounter K3 (page 20). The party receives no XP award for the skill challenge.

Skill Challenge: Smuggled Inside

The Iron Circle garrison imports wagonloads of stolen goods every day. The heroes can hide themselves in the supply wagons and get "delivered" to the castle. It's impossible to maneuver a large wagon through the castle gate, but a small one-horse wagon can negotiate the tight turn. Such a wagon has enough room to conceal up to three Medium characters beneath a load of produce or other supplies. At least one adventurer must pose as the wagon driver, and the guards won't be overly suspicious if one or two more characters are accompanying the wagon on foot to "help out" or "guard against bandits."

Read:

The castle's gate is closed. A bored-looking guard peeks out of one of the arrow slits in the gatehouse and calls, "Hold on! What have you got there?"

Level: 3 (XP 625).

Complexity: 3 (requires 8 successes before 3 failures).

Primary Skills: Bluff, Diplomacy, Endurance, Stealth.

Bluff (DC 17, 1 minute): A nonhidden character can use Bluff to convince the gate guards that the delivery is not worth a close look, or to pass off a disguised adventurer as a common cart driver. This skill can be used to achieve 3 successes in the challenge.

Diplomacy (DC 13, 1 minute): A nonhidden character can strike up a friendly banter with the guards or tell a good joke, allaying suspicions. This skill can be used to gain 3 successes in the challenge.

Endurance (DC 13, 1 minute): A hidden character can use Endurance to hold perfectly still and stifle any outcry when his or her hiding place is poked at. This skill can be used to achieve 1 skill challenge success per character.

Stealth (DC 21, 1 minute): A character can use Stealth to create the best hiding place possible. This skill can be used to gain 1 skill challenge success per character.

Success: On the first Bluff or Diplomacy success, the guards open the gate and wave the wagon into the courtyard for inspection. They hold the wagon just inside the gate until they finish their inspection, after which they instruct the driver to take the wagon to the kitchen (the southern door of area 15). As long as the characters stay with the wagon, they can go anywhere in the lower or upper bailey (areas 4 and 10) without challenge. If the characters drive up to an encounter area—for example, the stairs leading to the Great Tower—and suddenly leap out to attack, they'll gain a surprise round.

Failure: A hidden character is discovered, and the guards attack. Proceed with encounter K3 (page 20). The party receives no XP award for the skill challenge.

Surrender

The adventurers can deliberately allow themselves to be captured. The Iron Circle soldiers confiscate all their gear, rough them up, question them intently, and then lock them in the gaol (area 22). The heroes must then escape from the cells and defeat any guards responding to their breakout (see encounter K6). If they can manage that, they'll find their gear locked in a large chest in area 19.

ENCOUNTER K2: WALL DEFENSE

Encounter Level Varies

This encounter addresses what happens if the heroes try to scale the walls between the occupied towers. It explains how a fight against one or two wall sentries might spread into a wider encounter. A bungled attack here could easily wind up involving large groups of foes, creating a situation in which the adventurers are dealing with multiple encounters at the same time.

Setup

Allow the players to choose which part of the wall their characters are attempting to cross. A DC 8 Perception check is enough to tell how many sentries patrol a given section of wall.

Unless the adventurers take unusual steps to conceal their approach, the sentries spot them about 100 squares (500 feet) away in daylight, or about 20 squares (100 feet) away at night. In daylight, it's almost impossible to get close to the wall without being spotted. Little cover exists on the hillside outside the castle. Still, a stealthy party with a lot of patience might be able to manage it by using camouflage, low-crawling, or approaching with the sun at their backs. Have each hero make a DC 10 Stealth check to move within 50 squares without being seen, and a second DC 15 Stealth check to move within 20 squares. If at least half the characters succeed on both checks, the party arrives at the base of the wall without being noticed.

The sentries on the wall tops begin to shout an alarm as soon as they spot the heroes approaching—any group with legitimate business in the castle would use the front gate, after all. The sentries also shout an alarm if they are attacked without being killed. A stealthy hero might be able to get close enough to silence a sentry with a single projectile or spell, allowing the party to scale a wall section without being detected by any of the castle defenders.

If the alarm is raised, the monsters or villains in nearby encounter areas defend their part of the wall—either moving to arrow slits in their tower that face outward, or exiting their towers to take up stations on the parapet facing the attack (disregard the normal starting locations shown in the encounter in that case). The defenders open fire on the approaching party with ranged attacks as soon as the heroes come within range, and cut ropes or dislodge grappling hooks as needed to keep the adventurers off the walls.

When one wall is attacked, the defenders of nearby walls eventually join in the battle. Roll a 1d6 at the end of each round of fighting. On a roll result of 5 or 6, the defenders of a neighboring wall notice the fighting and come to the assistance of the area under attack.

When the adventurers approach the castle walls, place the “Iron Keep” battle map and use D&D Dungeon Tiles

or a wet-erase battle mat to show the ground outside. Even if the adventurers are attacking a part of the castle not shown on the battle map, use the battle map as a convenient way to represent the walls.

Read:

Little cover exists outside the walls. The bare hillside slopes steeply up to the battlements of the castle, which are 25 feet high. Between the crenellations, you catch glimpses of guards walking rounds on the wall tops.

Wall Defenses

For purposes of this encounter, the walls of Iron Keep are divided into six sections, as shown on the inset map. Different garrison groups are responsible for guarding each section.

Southwest Wall

- ◆ 2 Iron Circle sentries (S)
- ◆ All of the creatures in encounter K3

West Wall

- ◆ 4 Iron Circle sentries (S)
- ◆ All of the creatures in encounters K3

Northwest Tower Wall

- ◆ 4 Iron Circle sentries (S)

Northeast Wall

- ◆ 5 Iron Circle sentries (S)

East Wall

- ◆ 3 Iron Circle sentries (S)
- ◆ All of the creatures in encounter K5

Southeast Wall

- ◆ 5 Iron Circle sentries (S)
- ◆ All of the creatures in encounters K3 and K5

Iron Circle Sentry (S)	Level 3 Minion Artillery
Medium natural humanoid, human	XP 38
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.	Initiative +1
AC 17, Fortitude 16, Reflex 14, Will 14	Perception +1
Speed 6	
STANDARD ACTIONS	
⚔ Mace (weapon) ◆ At-Will	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +8 vs. AC	
Hit: 5 damage.	
🏹 Crossbow (weapon) ◆ At-Will	
Attack: Ranged 15/30 (one creature); +10 vs. AC	
Hit: 5 damage, and the target takes 2 extra damage if it leaves its space before the start of the sentry's next turn.	
Str 14 (+3)	Dex 10 (+1)
Con 12 (+2)	Int 9 (+0)
	Cha 9 (+0)
Alignment evil	Languages Common
Equipment leather armor, mace, crossbow, 20 bolts, black cloak embroidered with a gray circle	



Features of the Area

Illumination: Bright light during the day, dim light at night.

Arrow Slits: These narrow openings provide superior cover to creatures inside. The exterior slits are 10 feet above the ground, except the two slits covering the gate, which are 5 feet above the ground. Characters adjacent to a wall are out of line of sight from arrow slits in that wall.

Parapet: The crenellations provide cover against attacks that cross the outer side of the wall top. No parapet or cover guards against attacks from inside the wall.

Walls: The walls are well-made masonry (DC 20 Athletics check to climb). The battlements encircling the castle are 25 feet above the ground level outside, and 15 feet above the courtyards inside.

If a rope is fixed to the wall top, the Athletics check to climb the wall is DC 10. A creature can sever or dislodge a rope by using a standard action while adjacent to it. If so, anyone currently climbing it falls.

MULTI-STORY FIGHT

You might have to create two battle maps for this and other encounters in Iron Keep—one for the ground level, and one for the wall tops or second stories. Use the poster map for the ground floor where possible; *D&D Dungeon Tiles* or a wet-erase battle mat can be used for the upper levels. Characters can move from one map to the other by ascending or descending stairs, climbing, teleporting, jumping, or any other means within their power.

ENCOUNTER K3: THE OUTER BAILEY

Encounter Level 6 (1,330 XP)

Setup

Sturmik, tiefling commander (T)

3 Iron Circle guards (G)

10 Iron Circle sentries (S)

2 iron defenders (I)

This encounter uses the “Iron Keep” battle map. Place the heroes wherever they are likely to be at the start of the encounter, and place the monsters and villains as they appear.

Iron Keep’s main gate is protected by a number of guards under the command of a tiefling named Sturmik. They stand ready to repel any attempt to force the gates or scale the walls. Unless the heroes take unusual steps to conceal their approach, the villains spot them 100 squares (500 feet) away during the day, or 20 squares (100 feet) away at night. They hold their fire until the approaching party’s intent becomes clear.

If the adventurers just walk up to the castle, they won’t be fired on before Sturmik and his guards hail them and question them about their intentions. Sturmik gives the order to open fire if the heroes refuse to answer his challenge, answer his challenge with nonsense, or do something suspicious—for example, readying weapons, trying to climb the walls, or moving out of sight. If the heroes try to bluff their way into the castle, see encounter K1 (page 16).

Read:

The road winds around the hill, passing under the battlements of the keep before leading up to a strong gatehouse and tower. You catch glimpses of armed guards along the walls and watching you through arrow slits. When you reach a point about 30 feet or so from the gate, a harsh voice calls out from one of the arrow slits. “That’s far enough! Who are you, and what’s your business?”

Sturmik, Tiefling Commander (T) Medium natural humanoid	Level 5 Artillery XP 200
HP 48; Bloodied 24 AC 19, Fortitude 15, Reflex 18, Will 17 Speed 6 Resist 7 fire	Initiative +7 Perception +11 Low-light vision
STANDARD ACTIONS	
⚔ Dagger (weapon) ♦ At-Will Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +10 vs. AC, or +11 vs. AC against a bloodied target Hit: 1d4 + 5 damage.	
🔥 Balefire (fire) ♦ At-Will Attack: Ranged 10 (one creature); +10 vs. Reflex, or +11 vs. Reflex against a bloodied target Hit: 2d6 + 6 fire damage.	
🐍 Illusory Serpents (illusion, psychic) ♦ At-Will Attack: Area burst 1 within 10 (enemies in burst); +10 vs. Will, +11 vs. Will against a bloodied target Hit: 1d6 + 4 psychic damage, and ongoing 5 psychic damage (save ends).	
TRIGGERED ACTIONS	
👁 Cloak of Escape (teleportation) ♦ Encounter Trigger: An enemy enters a square adjacent to Sturmik. Effect (Immediate Reaction): Sturmik teleports 5 squares.	
🔥 Infernal Wrath (fire) ♦ Encounter Trigger: Sturmik is hit by an enemy’s attack. Effect (Free Action): The triggering enemy takes 1d6 + 3 fire damage.	
Skills Bluff +12, Insight +11, Stealth +14 Str 15 (+4) Dex 20 (+7) Wis 18 (+6) Con 12 (+3) Int 13 (+3) Cha 17 (+5)	
Alignment evil Languages Common, Giant Equipment leather armor, dagger, black surplice embroidered with a gold-trimmed gray circle	

3 Iron Circle Guards (G) Medium natural humanoid, human	Level 3 Soldier XP 150 each
HP 47; Bloodied 23 AC 19, Fortitude 16, Reflex 15, Will 14 Speed 5	Initiative +5 Perception +6
STANDARD ACTIONS	
⚔ Halberd (weapon) ♦ At-Will Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +8 vs. AC Hit: 1d10 + 5 damage. Effect: The target is marked until the end of the guard’s next turn.	
⚔ Powerful Strike (weapon) ♦ Recharge ☒ ☒ Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +8 vs. AC Hit: 1d10 + 5 damage, and the target falls prone.	
🏹 Crossbow (weapon) ♦ At-Will Attack: Ranged 15/30 (one creature); +8 vs. AC Hit: 1d8 + 5 damage.	
TRIGGERED ACTIONS	
⚔ I’m Still Here (weapon) ♦ At-Will Trigger: An enemy marked by the guard makes an attack that doesn’t include the guard as a target. Effect (Immediate Interrupt): The guard makes a melee basic attack against the triggering enemy.	
Skills Streetwise +7 Str 16 (+4) Dex 14 (+3) Wis 11 (+1) Con 15 (+3) Int 10 (+1) Cha 12 (+2)	
Alignment evil Languages Common Equipment chainmail, halberd, crossbow, 20 bolts, black cloak embroidered with a gray circle	

10 Iron Circle Sentries (S) **Level 3 Minion Artillery**

Medium natural humanoid, human XP 38 each

HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion. Initiative +1
 AC 17, Fortitude 16, Reflex 14, Will 14 Perception +1
 Speed 6

STANDARD ACTIONS⚔ **Mace (weapon) ♦ At-Will**

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +8 vs. AC
 Hit: 5 damage.

🏹 **Crossbow (weapon) ♦ At-Will**

Attack: Ranged 15/30 (one creature); +10 vs. AC
 Hit: 5 damage, and the target takes 2 extra damage if it leaves its space before the start of the sentry's next turn.

Str 14 (+3) Dex 10 (+1) Wis 10 (+1)
 Con 12 (+2) Int 9 (+0) Cha 9 (+0)

Alignment evil Languages Common

Equipment leather armor, mace, crossbow, 20 bolts, black cloak embroidered with a gray circle

2 Iron Defenders (I) **Level 3 Soldier**

Medium natural animate (construct, homunculus) XP 150 each

HP 47; Bloodied 23 Initiative +5
 AC 19, Fortitude 16, Reflex 15, Will 13 Perception +6
 Speed 6 Darkvision

Immune disease, poison

TRAITS**Pursue and Attack**

When the iron defender makes an opportunity attack, it shifts 1 square before and after the attack.

STANDARD ACTIONS⚔ **Bite ♦ At-Will**

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +8 vs. AC
 Hit: 1d8 + 6 damage.

TRIGGERED ACTIONS⚔ **Guard Creature ♦ At-Will**

Trigger: An adjacent enemy attacks a creature guarded by the iron defender.

Attack (Immediate Reaction): The iron defender makes a melee basic attack against the triggering enemy.

Str 16 (+4) Dex 15 (+3) Wis 11 (+1)
 Con 15 (+3) Int 5 (-2) Cha 8 (+0)

Alignment unaligned Languages –

Tactics

The sentries hold position and defend the courtyard while Sturmik and the guards repel attackers using ranged fire through the arrow slits, murder holes, or from the parapet. If possible, the guards drop the portcullis behind enemies at the main gate, then pick off the trapped foes from the arrow slits. If intruders enter the keep, one of the sentries releases the iron defenders into the courtyard. If Sturmik is alive, the iron defenders guard him.

Features of the Area

See “Iron Keep Characteristics” (page 12) for general keep features. Additional features are described below.

Arrow Slits: These narrow openings provide superior cover to creatures inside. The exterior slits are 10 feet above the ground, except the two slits covering the gate,



ENCOUNTER K3: THE OUTER BAILEY

which are 5 feet above the ground. Characters adjacent to a wall are out of line of sight from arrow slits in that wall.

Furnishings: These squares are difficult terrain.

Gates: The large main gates are made of iron plate riveted to an iron frame (DC 27 Strength check to force open; AC 4, Reflex 4, Fortitude 12, 120 hp).

Murder Holes: These small openings (not visible on the battle map) allow creatures in the upper level of the gatehouse to fire down on enemies by the main gate. They're 15 feet above the floor in front of the gate and grant superior cover against attacks from below.

Portcullis: A lever beside the arrow slits covering the gate drops an iron portcullis (DC 28 Strength check to wrench open; AC 5, Reflex 5, Fortitude 10, 80 hp) at the top of the first set of stairs. The portcullis offers cover, unless the attacker is adjacent to the portcullis and uses a missile weapon to fire through it.

Stairs: Stairs are treated as difficult terrain while ascending them and normal terrain otherwise.

Trees: Squares occupied by tree trunks are impassable but provide cover. Climbing a tree requires a DC 10 Athletics check, and a creature up a tree gains concealment.

Treasure: Sturmik carries a level 4 magic item as well as a pouch containing 25 gp and two opals worth 100 gp each.

ENCOUNTER K4: DESECRATED CHAPEL

Encounter Level 4 (900 XP)

Setup

Kaltis, dark adept (K)
1 spined devil (S)
2 tar devil guards (T)

This encounter has no accompanying battle map. You will need to draw the map on a wet-erase battle mat or build the map using *D&D Dungeon Tiles*.

Formerly dedicated to gods of valor and protection, the chapel of Harken Keep is now a makeshift shrine to Asmodeus, the favored patron for Iron Circle's leaders. An Iron Circle adept named Kaltis is the leader of Asmodeus's adherents under Nazin Redthorn's command. She has access to dark rituals that allow her to summon minor devils. She and her infernal allies have made the desecrated shrine their lair. Kaltis lives in the priest's quarters above the shrine; the devils guard this place against any intrusion.

If the adventurers enter through the main door, they see only the tar devils when they first enter the room. Do not place Kaltis or the spined devil on the battle map until the adventurers can see them.

When the adventurers enter this area, read:

This building is clearly a chapel—an altar stands at the far end of the room under a high, vaulted ceiling decorated with paintings of various divine myths. Many of the paintings have been defaced, a scarlet cloth lies over the altar stone, and a large brazen shield inscribed with a triple-triangle symbol hangs in the place of honor. Black drapes affixed to the windows give the room a gloomy, stuffy atmosphere, and the air is thick with the stench of hot pitch and sulfur.

Two infernal creatures stand guard in this chamber. Their eyes glow with an evil light, and a reeking aura of dark fumes clings to their bodies.

Tactics

The tar devils try to draw the fight into the open half of the room using *tarry net*. That allows the spined devil on the balcony (and Kaltis, when she emerges) to attack the party from above.

The spined devil remains on the balcony and attacks with *fiery spines*. While waiting for its *fiery spines* to recharge, it flies into position to flank an enemy and attacks with its claws.

Kaltis prefers to stay up on the balcony and attack from overhead using *fiery tendrils*. She uses *dark imperative* the first time one of her devil allies is wounded, moving the creature into a position from which it can flank with

Kaltis, Dark Adept (K) Level 3 Elite Controller (Leader)

Medium natural humanoid, human XP 300

HP 96; Bloodied 48 Initiative +2
AC 17, Fortitude 15, Reflex 14, Will 16 Perception +5
Speed 6

Saving Throws +2; Action Points 1

STANDARD ACTIONS

⚔ Forceful Mace (force, weapon) ⚡ At-Will

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +6 vs. Reflex

Hit: 1d8 + 1 damage plus 5 force damage, and the dark adept slides the target 3 squares.

🔥 Fiery Tendrils (fire) ⚡ At-Will

Attack: Area burst 1 within 10 (creatures in burst); +6 vs. Reflex

Hit: 1d6 + 6 fire damage, and the target is slowed and grants combat advantage until the end of Kaltis's next turn.

MINOR ACTIONS

⬅ Dark Imperative (healing, necrotic) ⚡ Recharge when bloodied

Effect: Close burst 5 (one ally in burst). Kaltis slides the target 3 squares, and the target gains 10 temporary hit points. While the target has these temporary hit points, its melee attacks deal 3 extra necrotic damage.

TRIGGERED ACTIONS

⬅ Diabolical Curse (fire) ⚡ At-Will

Trigger: An enemy within 5 squares of Kaltis makes an attack that includes Kaltis as a target.

Attack (*Immediate Interrupt*): Close burst 5 (triggering enemy); +6 vs. Will

Hit: 2d6 + 4 fire damage, Kaltis pushes the target 1 square, and the target takes a -2 penalty to attack rolls until the end of its current turn.

Skills Arcana +8, Religion +8

Str 13 (+2) Dex 12 (+2) Wis 18 (+5)

Con 16 (+4) Int 15 (+3) Cha 13 (+2)

Alignment evil Languages Common

Equipment chainmail, mace, red surcoat with gold-trimmed black circle

Spined Devil (S)

Level 6 Skirmisher

Medium immortal humanoid (devil)

XP 250

HP 70; Bloodied 35 Initiative +7
AC 20, Fortitude 19, Reflex 17, Will 17 Perception +10
Speed 5, fly 7 (hover) Darkvision
Resist 10 fire

STANDARD ACTIONS

⚔ Claws ⚡ At-Will

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +11 vs. AC

Hit: 2d6 + 7 damage (or 3d6 + 7 if the devil has combat advantage against the target).

⬅ Fiery Spines (fire, poison) ⚡ Recharge ☹ ☹

Attack: Close blast 5 (enemies in blast); +9 vs. Reflex

Hit: 2d6 + 4 fire damage, and ongoing 5 poison damage (save ends).

TRIGGERED ACTIONS

Elusive Prey ⚡ At-Will

Trigger: The devil is marked by an enemy.

Effect (*Immediate Reaction*): The devil is no longer marked by the triggering enemy and shifts 3 squares.

Str 18 (+7) Dex 15 (+5) Wis 14 (+5)

Con 14 (+5) Int 10 (+3) Cha 11 (+3)

Alignment evil Languages Supernal



Features of the Area

Illumination: Bright light.

Altar: Formerly dedicated to benevolent deities, this altar now honors Asmodeus. It is covered with a red cloth and two large black candles. The altar and its steps are difficult terrain.

Balcony: The balcony is 10 feet above the floor below. The rail provides cover for creatures on the balcony against attacks from below. Creatures on the balcony can't trace line of sight to creatures standing between the door and the pillars below, and vice versa.

Bunk: This bed creates difficult terrain.

Ceiling: The ceiling in the chapel is 20 feet high. The ceiling is 10 feet high above the balcony, in the priest's quarters, and directly below the balcony and priest's quarters.

Doors: The chapel doors are normal wood doors (DC 16 Strength check to force open; AC 5, Reflex 5, Fortitude 10, 20 hp).

Embrasures: The area's "windows" are arrow slits, only about 6 inches wide. Creatures adjacent to an embrasure have superior cover against attacks through the embrasure. A Small character can squeeze through an embrasure with a DC 21 Acrobatics check.

Furniture: These furnishings are lightly built and offer no impediment to movement—a moving character simply kicks them aside. A bed or table flipped on its side (a standard action) becomes a low wall, providing cover against attacks crossing it.

Trees: Squares occupied by tree trunks are impassable but provide cover. Climbing a tree requires a DC 10 Athletics check, and a creature up a tree gains concealment.

Treasure: Kaltis keeps a wooden case under the bed in her room. The case holds a level 5 magic item and 110 gp.

2 Tar Devil Guards (T)

Medium immortal humanoid (devil)

HP 53; Bloodied 26

AC 20, Fortitude 17, Reflex 15, Will 16

Speed 6

Resist 10 fire; Vulnerable 5 acid

TRAITS

☀ **Hot Reek (fire)** ◆ Aura 1

An enemy that starts its turn within the aura takes 2 fire damage and cannot shift on its current turn.

STANDARD ACTIONS

⊕ **Khopesh (weapon)** ◆ At-Will

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +9 vs. AC

Hit: 1d8 + 7 damage.

MINOR ACTIONS

⤴ **Tarry Net (fire)** ◆ Recharge if no creature is restrained by the net at the start of the devil's turn

Attack: Ranged 5 (one creature); +7 vs. Reflex

Hit: 1d6 + 4 fire damage, the target is restrained (save ends), and the devil pulls the target 5 squares to the nearest adjacent square.

Str 12 (+3)

Dex 17 (+5)

Wis 11 (+2)

Con 13 (+3)

Int 10 (+2)

Cha 12 (+3)

Alignment evil

Languages Supernal

Equipment khopesh, net

Level 4 Soldier

XP 175 each

Initiative +5

Perception +7

Darkvision

one of its ilk. If she's cornered, she retreats into her private quarters and tries to hold out until the devils can reach her.

ENCOUNTER K5: THE GREAT TOWER

Encounter Level 3 (780 XP)

Setup

2 dragonborn soldiers (D)

10 Iron Circle sentries (S)

This encounter has no accompanying battle map. You will need to draw the map on a wet-erase battle mat or build the map using *D&D Dungeon Tiles*. The important features are the second floor of the Great Tower, the adjoining wall parapets, and the courtyard out front with the stairs leading up to the drawbridge.

The Great Tower is a fortress within a fortress. Characters can enter this level via the wall top doors (usually locked) or the courtyard staircase that leads up to the drawbridge (area 18). The drawbridge is normally down (open) but can be raised at the first sign of trouble.

Eight of the sentries in this encounter are stationed atop the adjoining east and southeast walls (see encounter K2, page 18). The other two sentries are inside the keep, guarding the drawbridge. Place only the sentries that the heroes can see on the map. Do not place the dragonborn soldiers until they are encountered.

When the adventurers approach the tower, read:

The castle's great tower stands nearly 60 feet tall. No doors open to the ground of the upper bailey; instead, an exposed stairway leads up to a second-story drawbridge. Several arrow slits look out over the courtyard.

When the adventurers enter area 23, read:

This grand hallway is 20 feet high, with old coats of arms and banners displayed proudly. A large double door stands across the drawbridge, and several smaller doors appear in other walls. A windlass mechanism controls the drawbridge. A pair of Iron Circle soldiers and a dragonborn soldier wearing a black surcoat embroidered with a red-trimmed gray circle guard this hallway.

2 Dragonborn Soldiers (D)	Level 5 Soldier
Medium natural humanoid	XP 200 each
HP 63; Bloodied 31	Initiative +6
AC 21, Fortitude 18, Reflex 16, Will 15	Perception +3
Speed 5	
TRAITS	
Dragonborn Fury	
While bloodied, the dragonborn gains a +1 bonus to attack rolls.	
STANDARD ACTIONS	
⚔ Longsword (weapon) ♦ At-Will	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +10 vs. AC	
Hit: 1d8 + 9 damage.	
MINOR ACTIONS	
⚡ Dragon Breath (cold) ♦ Encounter	
Attack: Close blast 3 (creatures in blast); +8 vs. Reflex	
Hit: 1d6 + 4 cold damage.	
TRIGGERED ACTIONS	
⚡ Impetuous Spirit (weapon) ♦ At-Will	
Trigger: An enemy leaves a square adjacent to the dragonborn.	
Effect (Immediate Reaction): The dragonborn makes a melee basic attack against the triggering enemy.	
⚡ Martial Recovery (weapon) ♦ Recharge when the dragonborn uses <i>impetuous spirit</i>	
Trigger: The dragonborn misses with a melee attack.	
Effect (Free Action): The dragonborn makes a melee basic attack against the same target.	
Skills Endurance +9, History +4, Intimidate +8	
Str 16 (+5)	Dex 15 (+4) Wis 12 (+3)
Con 15 (+4)	Int 11 (+2) Cha 9 (+1)
Alignment unaligned Languages Common, Draconic	
Equipment scale armor, light shield, longsword	

10 Iron Circle Sentries (S)	Level 3 Minion Artillery
Medium natural humanoid, human	XP 38 each
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.	Initiative +1
AC 17, Fortitude 16, Reflex 14, Will 14	Perception +1
Speed 6	
STANDARD ACTIONS	
⚔ Mace (weapon) ♦ At-Will	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +8 vs. AC	
Hit: 5 damage.	
⚡ Crossbow (weapon) ♦ At-Will	
Attack: Ranged 15/30 (one creature); +10 vs. AC	
Hit: 5 damage, and the target takes 2 extra damage if it leaves its space before the start of the sentry's next turn.	
Str 14 (+3)	Dex 10 (+1) Wis 10 (+1)
Con 12 (+2)	Int 9 (+0) Cha 9 (+0)
Alignment evil Languages Common	
Equipment leather armor, mace, crossbow, 20 bolts, black cloak embroidered with a gray circle	

Tactics

If the adventurers act quickly or successfully employ Bluff or Stealth, they might be able to rush the tower's front hall before the drawbridge can be closed. If the heroes are stuck outside the tower, the Iron Circle sentries attack from whichever arrow slit or parapet is convenient. The sentries on the southeast wall have a good shot at characters on the top landing of the exterior staircase.

The sentries on the adjoining wall tops hold their positions and fire at characters outside the tower until all adventurers are inside the tower. Then the sentries move into the tower to join the fighting inside.

The dragonborn prefer not to hit their Iron Circle allies with *dragon breath* but might choose to do so if they can strike at multiple heroes with such a maneuver. The first time a dragonborn misses with a melee attack, it uses *martial recovery* to reroll the attack.

Features of the Area

Illumination: Bright light during the day. By night, the courtyard is dimly lit and the interior of the Great Tower is brightly lit.

Bunks: These beds create difficult terrain.

Ceilings: The ceiling throughout the second level of the Great Tower is 20 feet high.

Desks and Tables: These sturdy old furnishings create difficult terrain in their spaces. If a desk or table is flipped on its side (a standard action), it becomes a low wall, providing cover against attacks crossing it.

Doors: The doors from the tower to the wall tops are sturdy, reinforced wood (DC 20 Strength check to force open; AC 5, Reflex 5, Fortitude 10, 30 hp). If locked, a DC 22 Thievery check opens them.

Drawbridge: While open, the drawbridge (AC 4, Reflex 4, Fortitude 12, 60 hp) serves as a short bridge from the exterior stairs to area 23. Loopholes have been placed so defenders inside can fire at attackers through the closed drawbridge, gaining superior cover against responding attacks.

If the drawbridge is destroyed, creatures can jump from the stair landing to the tower doorway (and vice versa) with a DC 10 Athletics check. Characters can't get a running start from outside because the stair landing isn't big enough. On a failure, the jumper falls 15 feet to the ground, taking 1d10 damage.

A character can jump to the narrow ledge of the bridge opening while it's closed (DC 10 Athletics check), balance there (DC 20 Acrobatics check), and try to pull the door open (DC 20 Strength check).

If a character gets inside to the windlass, the drawbridge can be released with a move action. It immediately falls open. Four move actions are needed to draw the bridge closed with the windlass.

Embrasures: The area's "windows" are arrow slits, only about 6 inches wide. Creatures adjacent to an embrasure have superior cover against attacks through the



embrasure. A Small character can squeeze through an embrasure with a DC 21 Acrobatics check.

Exterior Stairs: These steps have a low wall which provides cover from upper bailey attacks. No such cover exists facing the tower. The stairs are treated as difficult terrain while ascending them or normal terrain otherwise.

Parapet: The crenellations provide cover against attacks that cross the outer side of the wall top. No parapet or cover guards against attacks from the inner side of the wall.

Development

If combat erupts on this level of the keep, the villains on the levels above and below are alerted. They remain in their designated areas and cannot be surprised.

ENCOUNTER K6: THE GAOL

Encounter Level 3 (825 XP)

Setup

- 2 Iron Circle enforcers (E)
- 1 Iron Circle mage (M)
- 1 tar devil harrier (T)
- Baron Stockmer (B)
- 3 servants (S)

This encounter takes place on the first floor of the Great Tower (areas 19 and 22 in particular). There is no battle map to accompany the encounter; you'll need to draw the map on a wet-erase battle mat or build the map using *D&D Dungeon Tiles*.

Nazin Redthorn has assigned two enforcers to make sure that Baron Stockmer stays put in the dungeons of his own castle. A mage and a tar devil round out the guard detail. They also keep an eye on the nearby postern gate (area 21) and supervise the few remaining castle servants working in the kitchen.



When the adventurers enter area 19, read:

This area is the tower's kitchen. Several pots hang over a large hearth, and counters full of supplies and utensils line the walls. A stairway climbs up to the foyer, and a postern gate leads outside the castle. A heavy, reinforced door beyond the hearth opens to a small guardroom where an Iron Circle soldier sits playing Three-Dragon Ante with a bearded human mage. Servants work in the kitchen, covering before a brawny Iron Circle soldier who's keeping an eye on them.

2 Iron Circle Enforcers (E)	Level 2 Elite Brute
Medium natural humanoid, human	XP 250 each
HP 88; Bloodied 44	Initiative +2
AC 14, Fortitude 15, Reflex 14, Will 13	Perception +1
Speed 5	
Saving Throws +2; Action Points 1	
STANDARD ACTIONS	
⚔ Heavy Flail (weapon) ♦ At-Will	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +7 vs. AC	
Hit: 2d6 + 6 damage.	
⚔ Flail Sweep (weapon) ♦ Recharge when first bloodied	
Attack: Close burst 1 (creatures in burst); +5 vs. Fortitude	
Hit: 3d6 + 6 damage, and the target falls prone.	
TRIGGERED ACTIONS	
⚔ Smash Back (weapon) ♦ At-Will	
Trigger: An enemy hits the enforcer with a melee attack.	
Attack (Immediate Reaction): Melee 1 (triggering creature); +7 vs. AC	
Hit: 2d6 + 6 damage, and the enforcer gains a +2 bonus to attack rolls against the target until the end of its next turn.	
Skills Athletics +10, Intimidate +7	
Str 18 (+5)	Dex 12 (+2) Wis 10 (+1)
Con 14 (+3)	Int 11 (+1) Cha 13 (+2)
Alignment evil	Languages Common
Equipment chainmail, heavy flail, black surcoat embroidered with a red-trimmed gray circle	

Iron Circle Mage (M)	Level 4 Artillery
Medium natural humanoid, human	XP 175
HP 42; Bloodied 21	Initiative +2
AC 18, Fortitude 15, Reflex 18, Will 16	Perception +4
Speed 6	
STANDARD ACTIONS	
⚔ Quarterstaff (weapon) ♦ At-Will	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +9 vs. AC	
Hit: 1d8 + 4 damage.	
⚡ Unerring Acid Bolt (acid) ♦ At-Will	
Attack: Ranged 10 (one creature).	
Effect: 6 acid damage.	
⚡ Lightning Daggers (lightning) ♦ Recharge ☉ ☽ ☾ ☿	
Attack: Ranged 10 (three creatures); +7 vs. Reflex	
Hit: 1d6 + 4 lightning damage.	
⚡ Thunder Burst (thunder) ♦ Encounter	
Attack: Area burst 1 within 10 (creatures in burst); +7 vs. Fortitude	
Hit: 1d8 + 7 damage, and the target is dazed and deafened (save ends both).	
Skills Arcana +11	
Str 10 (+2)	Dex 11 (+2) Wis 15 (+4)
Con 12 (+3)	Int 18 (+6) Cha 12 (+3)
Alignment evil	Languages Common, Dwarven, Elven
Equipment quarterstaff, black cloak embroidered with a silver-trimmed gray circle	

Tar Devil Harrier (T)		Level 3 Artillery	
Medium immortal humanoid (devil)		XP 150	
HP 36; Bloodied 18	Initiative +5		
AC 17, Fortitude 15, Reflex 15, Will 14	Perception +8		
Speed 6	Darkvision		
Resist 10 fire; Vulnerable 5 acid			
STANDARD ACTIONS			
⚔ Kukri (weapon) ♦ At-Will			
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +8 vs. AC			
Hit: 1d6 + 5 damage.			
🔥 Tar Ball (fire) ♦ At-Will			
Attack: Ranged 10 (one creature); +8 vs. Reflex			
Hit: 2d6 + 4 fire damage, and the target is slowed and takes ongoing 2 fire damage (save ends).			
MINOR ACTIONS			
☁ Fuming Cloud (fire, zone) ♦ Encounter			
Attack: Close burst 1 (creatures in burst); +6 vs. Fortitude			
Hit: 1d6 + 4 fire damage.			
Effect: The burst becomes a zone that lasts until the end of the encounter. Creatures in the zone gain concealment, and any creature ending its turn in the zone takes 2 fire damage. Squares within the zone are difficult terrain.			
Str 15 (+3)	Dex 18 (+5)	Wis 14 (+3)	
Con 12 (+2)	Int 11 (+1)	Cha 11 (+1)	
Alignment evil		Languages Supernal	
Equipment kukri			

3 Servants (S)		Level 1 Minion Skirmisher	
Medium natural humanoid		XP 0 each	
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.		Initiative +0	
AC 15, Fortitude 12, Reflex 12, Will 12		Perception +0	
Speed 6			
TRAITS			
Keep Your Head Down			
The servant gains a +2 bonus to defenses against opportunity attacks.			
Str 10 (+0)	Dex 10 (+0)	Wis 10 (+0)	
Con 10 (+0)	Int 10 (+0)	Cha 8 (-1)	
Alignment unaligned		Languages Common	

Tactics

When enemies appear on the stairs or at the postern gate, the enforcer in the kitchen (area 19) moves to guard the doorway leading to the gaol (area 22) and calls for help. The second enforcer comes out to defend the doorway. The mage and tar devil hang back and use ranged or area attacks against enemies fighting the enforcers.

If the fight goes badly, the mage seals himself in area 22, possibly locking the enforcers outside. The mage threatens to kill Baron Stockmer unless the adventurers agree to let him flee. This is an empty threat, since the mage would never slay the baron without Nazin's approval; the characters realize the mage is bluffing with a successful Insight check (opposed by the mage's Bluff check).

The castle servants are loyal Harkenwolders forced into drudgery by the Iron Circle. They do their best to stay out of the way and shout encouragement at the heroes. They tell the heroes that Baron Stockmer is being held in a cell off the guardroom.

Features of the Area

Illumination: Bright light.

Arrow Slits: These narrow openings provide superior cover to creatures inside. The exterior slits are 10 feet above the ground. Characters adjacent to a wall are out of line of sight from arrow slits in that wall.

Bunks: These beds create difficult terrain.

Chairs and Stools: These furnishings are lightly built and offer no impediment to movement—a moving character simply kicks them aside.

Desks and Tables: These sturdy old furnishings create difficult terrain in their spaces. If a desk or table is flipped on its side (a standard action), it becomes a low wall, providing cover against attacks crossing it.

Doors: The door from the kitchen to the gaol and the cell doors are sturdy, reinforced wood (DC 20 Strength check to force open, DC 20 Thievery check to unlock; AC 5, Reflex 5, Fortitude 10, 30 hp). The other interior doors are not as sturdy (DC 16 Strength check to break down; AC 5, Reflex 5, Fortitude 10, 20 hp) and aren't locked.

Hearth: A creature entering a hearth square or starting its turn in one takes 1d6 fire damage.

Postern Gate (Area 21): The door leading outside from the kitchen is made of iron plate riveted to an iron frame (DC 25 Strength check to force open; AC 5, Reflex 5, Fortitude 10, 60 hp). It is locked both inside and out (DC 25 Thievery check to unlock), and Nazin Redthorn carries the key.

RESCUING BARON STOCKMER

Baron Stockmer is a brave old fellow of 65 years, weak and sick after his imprisonment. He's pugnacious and optimistic, but clearly in no shape to take up arms despite his brave words.

He thanks the heroes for their help and promises to reward them richly. Stockmer urges the heroes to finish off Nazin Redthorn rather than worry about his safety. If asked about the castle, he tells the adventurers about the secret passage from the dining room (area 26) to the lord's quarters (area 30).

ENCOUNTER K7: LORD'S CHAMBERS

Encounter Level 5 (1,075 XP)

Setup

Nazin Redthorn (N)
Iron Circle dark adept (A)
3 hobgoblin sellswords (H)

This encounter takes place on the third floor of the Great Tower, specifically areas 27 and 30. There is no accompanying battle map for this encounter; you'll need to draw the map on a wet-erase battle mat or build it using *D&D Dungeon Tiles*.

Nazin Redthorn, the would-be Lord of Harkenwold, makes his lair in the rooms formerly belonging to Baron Stockmer. Attending him are three loyal hobgoblin mercenaries from the distant goblin stronghold of Daggerburg and an Iron Circle dark adept. If Nazin Redthorn did not survive encounter B4 (page 10), replace him with a female Iron Circle commander named Tyranda Falkon (same statistics).

If the adventurers come up the secret stairs from area 26, they might surprise Nazin and his guards. Have each hero climbing the stairs make a DC 13 Stealth check; if at least half the characters succeed, the party surprises the villains. Remember, the first character on the steps has to spend an action to open the secret door.



When the adventurers enter area 27, read:
A sitting room opens at the top of the stairs. At the far end stands a large door emblazoned with the Stockmer coat of arms. Two fierce hobgoblin warriors in scale armor glare at you and raise their morningstars.

The following read-aloud text applies to area 30 and will need to be adjusted if Nazin Redthorn is not present:

This spacious suite clearly belongs to the master of the keep. Comfortable carpets cover the wooden floor, and various tapestries and paintings hang on the walls. Across the room stands a large canopy bed. A magnificent hearth lies in a corner. A hobgoblin with a morningstar stands guard by the door, and standing over a table is a priest in Iron Circle scarlet. Sitting near him is a tall, massively muscled man with short red hair and a great three-headed flail at his side—Nazin Redthorn!

The warlord of the Iron Circle looks at you with contempt. "You think you've defeated us?" he snarls. "You are rabbits in the wolf's den. We'll hang your corpses from the battlements!"

Nazin Redthorn (N)	Level 5 Elite Soldier (Leader)
Medium natural humanoid, human	XP 400
HP 126; Bloodied 63	Initiative +4
AC 21, Fortitude 19, Reflex 16, Will 17	Perception +3
Speed 5	
Saving Throws +2; Action Points 1	
STANDARD ACTIONS	
⊕ Triple-Headed Flail (weapon) ◆ At-Will	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +10 vs. AC	
Hit: 1d10 + 5 damage.	
† Wolf Pack Tactics (weapon) ◆ At-Will	
Effect: Before the attack, one ally adjacent to Nazin or the target shifts 1 square as a free action.	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +10 vs. AC	
Hit: 1d10 + 5 damage.	
† Warlord's Strike (weapon) ◆ Recharge ☒ ☒	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +10 vs. AC	
Hit: 2d10 + 5 damage, and an ally within 5 squares of Nazin gains a +4 bonus to damage rolls against the target until the end of Nazin's next turn.	
◀ Infernal Flames (fire, healing) ◆ Recharge when first bloodied	
Attack: Close burst 5 (enemies in burst); +8 vs. Reflex	
Hit: 2d6 + 5 fire damage, and the target is dazed (save ends).	
Effect: Each ally in the burst regains 10 hit points.	
TRIGGERED ACTIONS	
† Tripping Flail (weapon) ◆ At-Will	
Trigger: An enemy misses Nazin with an attack.	
Attack (Immediate Reaction): Melee 1 (triggering enemy); +8 vs. Fortitude	
Hit: 1d10 + 6 damage, and the target falls prone.	
Skills Athletics +12, Intimidate +9	
Str 20 (+7)	Dex 10 (+2) Wis 13 (+3)
Con 15 (+4)	Int 15 (+4) Cha 16 (+5)
Alignment evil Languages Common, Giant, Supernal	
Equipment scale armor, heavy shield, triple-headed flail, black surcoat embroidered with a red- and gold-trimmed gray circle	

Iron Circle Dark Adept (A) Level 3 Controller (Leader)

Medium natural humanoid, human XP 150

HP 46; Bloodied 23 Initiative +2
 AC 17, Fortitude 14, Reflex 14, Will 16 Perception +5
 Speed 6

STANDARD ACTIONS⊕ **Dark Dagger** (fire, weapon) ◆ **At-Will**

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +6 vs. Reflex
 Hit: 2d4 + 4 fire damage, and the dark adept slides the target 3 squares.

✦ **Fiery Tendrils** (fire) ◆ **At-Will**

Attack: Area burst 1 within 10 (creatures in burst); +6 vs. Reflex
 Hit: 1d6 + 6 fire damage, and the target is slowed and grants combat advantage until the end of the dark adept's next turn.

MINOR ACTIONS◀ **Dark Imperative** (healing, necrotic) ◆ **Recharge** when bloodied

Effect: Close burst 5 (one ally in burst). The dark adept slides the target 3 squares, and the target gains 10 temporary hit points. While the target has these temporary hit points, its melee attacks deal 3 extra necrotic damage.

Skills Arcana +8, Religion +8

Str 13 (+2) Dex 12 (+2) Wis 18 (+5)
 Con 14 (+3) Int 15 (+3) Cha 13 (+2)

Alignment evil Languages Common

Equipment chainmail, dagger, red surcoat with gold-trimmed black circle

3 Hobgoblin Sellswords (H)**Level 4 Brute**

Medium natural humanoid XP 175 each

HP 66; Bloodied 33 Initiative +4
 AC 16, Fortitude 17, Reflex 15, Will 15 Perception +7
 Speed 5

STANDARD ACTIONS⊕ **Morningstar** (weapon) ◆ **At-Will**

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +9 vs. AC
 Hit: 2d10 + 4 damage.

↓ **Savage Strike** (weapon) ◆ **At-Will**

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +9 vs. AC
 Hit: 2d10 + 4 damage, and the hobgoblin pushes the target 1 square.
 Miss: Half damage.

TRIGGERED ACTIONS**Hobgoblin Resilience** ◆ **At-Will**

Trigger: The hobgoblin is subjected to an effect that a save can end.

Effect (Immediate Reaction): The hobgoblin makes a saving throw against the triggering effect.

Str 18 (+6) Dex 14 (+4) Wis 10 (+2)
 Con 16 (+5) Int 11 (+2) Cha 15 (+4)

Alignment evil Languages Common, Goblin

Equipment chainmail, morningstar, helm

Tactics

The hobgoblins in area 27 roar as they rush boldly into melee. Nazin and the others in area 30 hear the fighting outside and get ready to join the battle. Nazin is at his best leading from the front, so he's likely to come out from his room to take the fight to the heroes.

Nazin begins with *warlord's strike* and uses *infernal flames* one or two rounds into the fight, preferably when the hobgoblins have taken a hit or two and can use the healing. Nazin doesn't hoard his action point—he uses it when he can cause the most damage to the heroes.

The dark adept stays out of melee reach and attacks with *fiery tendrils*. He reserves his *dark imperative* power for Nazin, using it to aid the warlord when he's injured.

If the battle turns against Nazin, he orders his remaining followers to hold off the heroes as long as possible and attempts to flee down the secret staircase to area 26. He first tries to gather reinforcements, but if there are none, he heads down to the gaol (area 22) to murder Baron Stockmer out of sheer anger and spite.

Features of the Area

Illumination: Bright light.

Bed: These squares are difficult terrain.

Chairs and Stools: These furnishings are lightly built and offer no impediment to movement—a moving character simply kicks them aside.

Desks and Tables: These sturdy old furnishings create difficult terrain in their spaces. If a desk or table is flipped on its side (a standard action), it becomes a low wall, providing cover against attacks crossing it.

Doors: The doors on this level are normally unlocked, except for the one leading to the treasury (the small interior room off area 30). The treasury door is sturdy, reinforced wood (DC 20 Strength check to force open, DC 20 Thievery check to unlock; AC 5, Reflex 5, Fortitude 10, 30 hp). Nazin carries the key.

Embrasures: The area's "windows" are arrow slits, only about 6 inches wide. Creatures adjacent to an embrasure have superior cover against attacks through the embrasure. A Small character can squeeze through an embrasure (DC 21 Acrobatics check).

Hearth: A creature entering or starting its turn in a hearth square takes 1d6 fire damage.

Treasure: Each hobgoblin carries a pouch of 50 gp. The chests in the treasury are unlocked and hold 300 gp, 1,200 sp, a level 6 magic item, and a level 7 magic item.

ENDING THE ADVENTURE

After the adventurers defeat Nazin Redthorn, free Baron Stockmer, and rid Castle Harken of villains and monsters, the Iron Circle is decisively defeated. Any surviving mercenaries abroad in Harkenwold soon realize that the tide has turned against them and beat a hasty retreat down the road to the southeast. They won't be back anytime soon.

The Heroes' Reward

The adventurers are hailed throughout Harkenwold as great heroes. They're treated as honored guests in Harken Keep and the villages. Baron Stockmer (if he lives) confers an honorary title on each character: Defender of Harkenwold. Any treasure the heroes have found through the course of the adventure is theirs to keep, even though much of it once belonged to Harkenwolders—Baron Stockmer insists! If the heroes expect or demand more of a reward, the baron gives them the magic items in his treasury (see encounter K7). If they've already claimed these items, the baron regrets that he has nothing more to offer them.

The Next Adventure?

Although the heroes have beaten Redthorn and his band of reavers thoroughly, the Iron Circle is still active in the Nentir Vale. More agents and soldiers are at work in the lands nearby, causing trouble. If you choose to continue the campaign storyline that begins in this adventure, you can devise your own encounters or find new adventures at DungeonsandDragons.com.

To get the heroes hooked into the next adventure, feel free to provide the players with one of the following clues as they tidy up after the Iron Circle's defeat and retreat:

A Superior: The heroes discover correspondence between Nazin Redthorn and a mysterious superior he addresses as "Lord Vhennyk." It's clear that Lord Vhennyk ordered the attack on Harkenwold, but Lord Vhennyk is not specific about his own activities. In several places he tells Redthorn that he can be reached by sending dispatches to an inn in the town of Winterhaven, at the far end of the Nentir Vale.

A Quisling: Rennis, proprietor of the Harkenwold Trading Station in Harken, is unmasked as a spy for Nazin Redthorn (see *Reavers of Harkenwold Part 1: The Iron Circle*, page 9). When questioned, he tells the rebel leaders that Redthorn had him send dispatches to Winterhaven, but Rennis escapes from custody before he reveals any more. Baron Stockmer believes that Rennis might have fled to Winterhaven.

ENCOUNTER E5: EPILOGUE

Encounter Level 4 (875 XP)

This encounter can occur days or weeks after the liberation of Harkenwold. It assumes that the heroes are either killing time in Harkenwold or taking a break on the road to their next destination.

The purpose of this encounter is to present Lord Vhennyk and the Iron Circle as an ongoing threat in your campaign. If you're planning to take your campaign in other directions, feel free not to use this final encounter.

Setup

Lividius, tiefling murderer (L)

5 Harkenwold bystanders (B)

1 horse (H)

This encounter uses the "Tavern" battle map. Have the players place their characters in the tavern, and then place the bystanders, one of whom is the proprietor.

If needed, horse statistics can be found on page 11.

Read:

You are drawn to the quiet comfort of a roadside tavern, where the proprietor offers you free drinks. "Least I can do for the Defenders of Harkenwold," she says with a smile. The locals are eager to hear more about your exploits, but the sudden thumping of hooves interrupts your reverie. Through a window you see a black horse, its rider a scarred tiefling warrior wearing chainmail and gauntlets. He dismounts and enters the tavern, a greatsword over his back and a dripping sack in one hand. He recognizes you immediately and frowns. "I carry a message from Lord Vhennyk."

When he appears, place Lividius inside the tavern near the entrance. His horse remains outside.

If a character asks about Vhennyk's message, read:

"Lord Vhennyk wants you to know that the Iron Circle is not finished with Harkenwold or the Nentir Vale."

With that, the tiefling dumps the contents of the bloody sack. A severed head tumbles across the floor, and you recognize the dead-eyed face staring up at you.

The severed head belongs to Dar Gremath, Reithann, or some other noteworthy Harkenwold rebel whom the heroes know. At this point, the conversation ends as Lividius draws his sword. Roll initiative.

Tactics

Lividius intends to show the heroes that Lord Vhennyk means business. The tiefling fights to the death and kills any bystanders who get in the way.

Lividius stays close to as many enemies as possible, hoping to catch them in his aura and burn them using *fire step*. He uses *blade of Avernus* as often as he can, and *heart of Nessus* whenever he is dazed or stunned.

Lividius stole the horse from a stable in Harkenwold (possibly Dar Gremath's stable in Albridge). The horse does not participate in the battle and flees if attacked.

Most of the Harkenwold bystanders clear the tavern as quickly as possible while the tavernkeeper takes cover behind the bar.

Lividius, Tiefling Murderer (L) Level 4 Solo Brute

Medium natural humanoid XP 875

HP 240; Bloodied 120 Initiative +5
 AC 18, Fortitude 17, Reflex 15, Will 15 Perception +3
 Speed 5 Low-light vision
 Resist 7 fire
 Saving Throws +5; Action Points 2

TRAITS

☞ **Hell's Embrace** (cold) ◆ **Aura 1**
 Any creature that exits the aura on its turn takes 5 cold damage.

STANDARD ACTIONS

⚔ **Greatsword** (weapon) ◆ **At-Will**
 Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +9 vs. AC, or +10 vs. AC if the target is bloodied
 Hit: 2d10 + 4 damage.

⚔ **Blade of Avernus** (fire, weapon) ◆ **At-Will**
 Attack: Close burst 1 (creatures in burst); +9 vs. AC, or +10 vs. AC if the target is bloodied
 Hit: 2d10 + 4 fire damage.
 Miss: Half damage.

MOVE ACTIONS

⚔ **Fire Step** (fire, teleportation) ◆ **At-Will**
 Effect: Lividius teleports 5 squares. Each creature adjacent to the square he teleports from or appears in takes 5 fire damage, or 10 fire damage if Lividius is bloodied.

TRIGGERED ACTIONS

☞ **Heart of Nessus** (fire, polymorph) ◆ **At-Will**
 Trigger: Lividius is dazed or stunned by an attack.
 Effect (No Action): Lividius and all of his gear transform into living flame and remain in this form until he is no longer dazed or stunned. While in this form, he takes half damage from all attacks, his aura deals fire damage instead of cold damage, and any enemy that hits him with an attack takes fire damage equal to half the damage dealt.

Infernal Wrath (fire) ◆ **Encounter**

Trigger: Lividius is hit by an enemy's attack.
 Effect (Free Action): The triggering enemy takes 1d6 + 7 fire damage.

Skills Athletics +11, Bluff +12, Intimidate +10, Stealth +11
 Str 18 (+6) Dex 17 (+5) Wis 13 (+3)
 Con 20 (+7) Int 12 (+3) Cha 16 (+5)

Alignment evil Languages Common, Elven, Supernal
 Equipment chainmail, greatsword



5 Harkenwold Bystanders (B) Level 1 Minion Brute

Medium natural humanoid, human XP 0 each

HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion. Initiative +0
 AC 15, Fortitude 13, Reflex 13, Will 13 Perception +0
 Speed 6
 Str 10 (+0) Dex 10 (+0) Wis 10 (+0)
 Con 10 (+0) Int 11 (+0) Cha 8 (-1)

Alignment unaligned Languages Common

Features of the Area

Illumination: Bright light.

Bar: The bar provides cover to anyone hiding behind it. Behind the bar are several bottles that can be used as improvised weapons.

Chairs and Stools: These furnishings are lightly built, and offer no impediment to movement—a moving character simply kicks them aside.

Tables: A table creates difficult terrain in its space. If flipped on its side (a standard action), a table becomes a low wall, providing cover against attacks crossing it.





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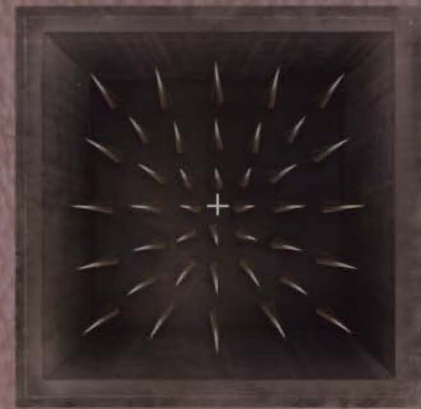
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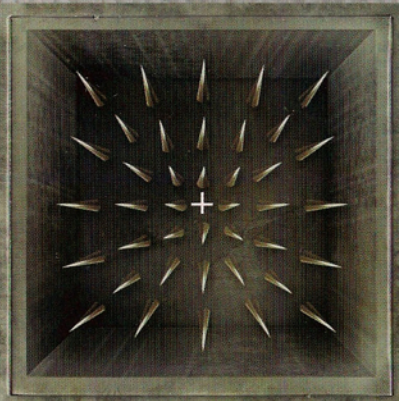


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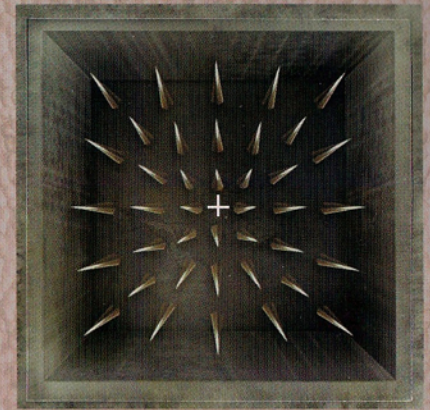


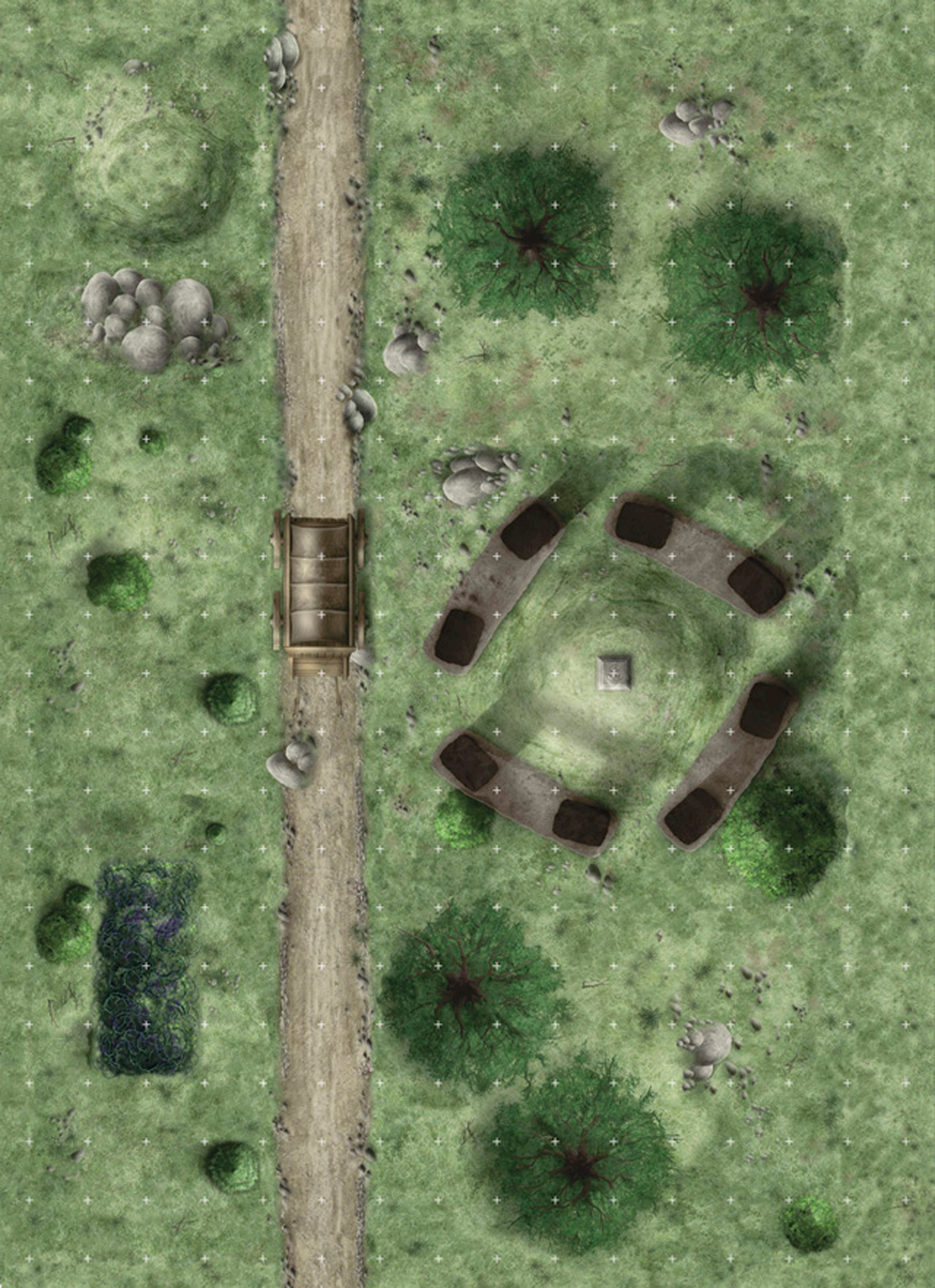


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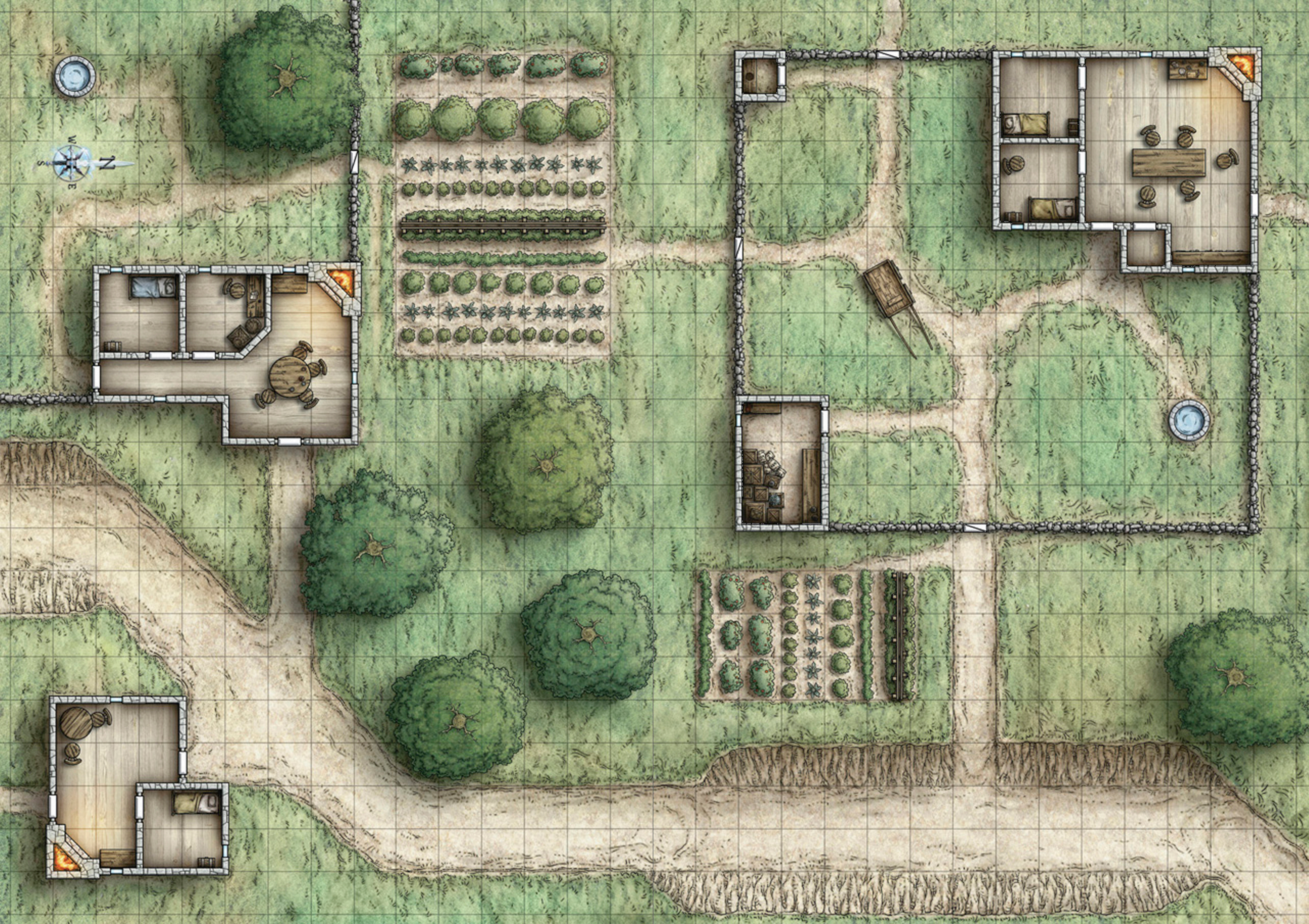
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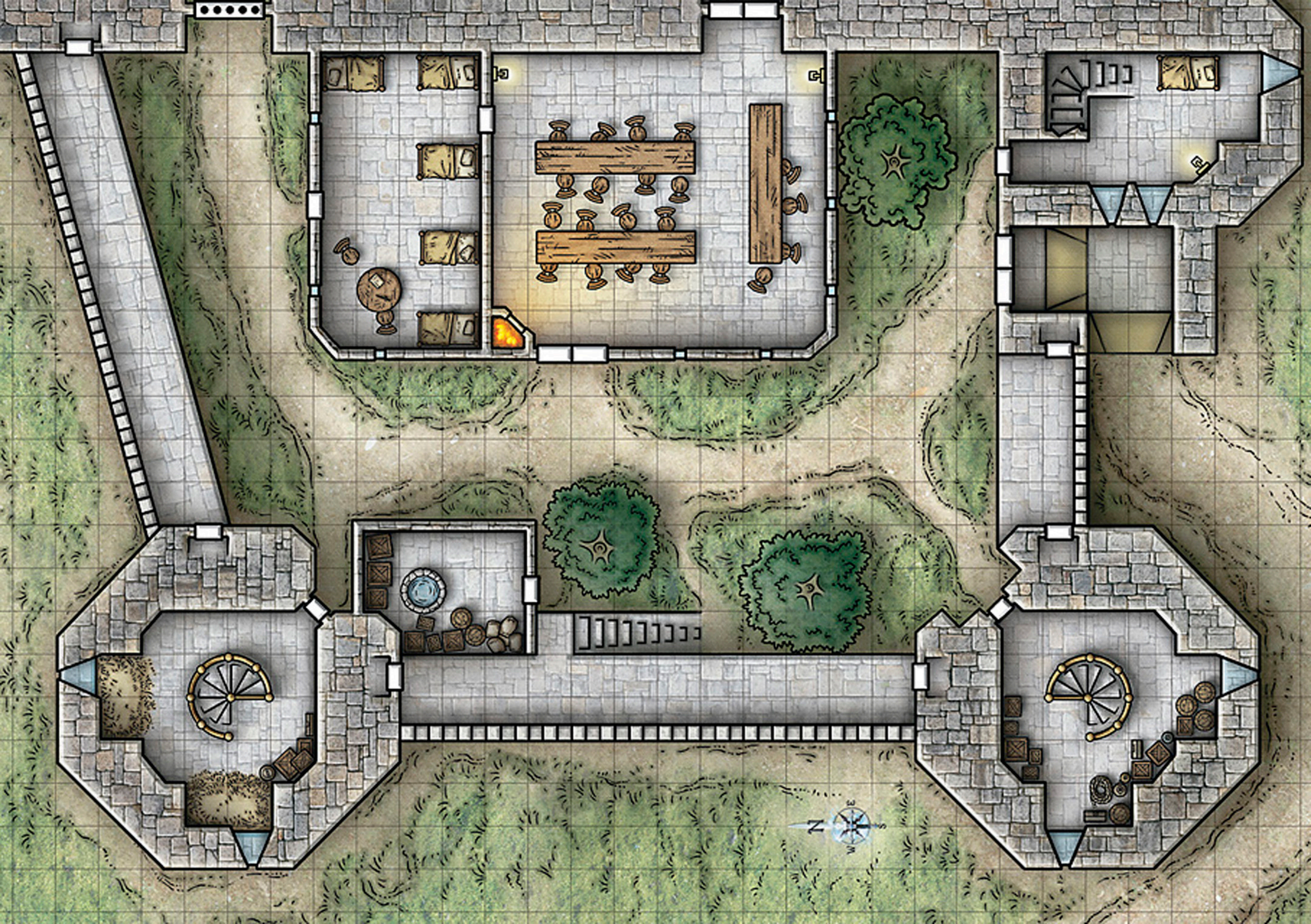
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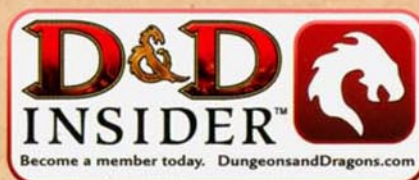


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