

# MONSTERS' GUIDE TO COMBAT ENCOUNTERS

*For Dungeon of the Mad Mage  
Level 13: Trobriand's Graveyard*

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## About this Guide

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Combat is one of three main pillars of the game, apart from exploration and interaction. And it takes a lot of time to prepare and run good combat encounter. The goal of this guide is to help DMs who are running Waterdeep: Dungeon of the Mad Mage adventure to get better understanding on how to run combat encounters, how to make them coherent, memorable and fun!

Preparation process divided into 3 steps:

1. Determining Encounter Difficulty.
2. Determining Surprise.
3. Determining Creatures' Tactics.

First step will give you general understanding about how difficult combat encounter might be for your player characters. Each level of WDMM is designed for PCs of particular level. I use a guideline from Encounter Building section in Xanathar's Guide to Everything (XGE, p. 88) to evaluate how many PCs of corresponding level should be in the party to overcome the encounter. Math is simple. If you have the same number of PCs – it is good fight. If you have more PCs (2/3 of number of PCs is needed) – they will pass it with ease, but it still be challenging. If you have less PCs (3/2 of number of PCs is needed) – encounter will be hard, but still winnable. Also, I put notes about combat difficulty, which I think is important. Depending on this information you can adjust the encounter for your group, skip it entirely or think about possible defeat consequences.

Second step is always up to DM, so you should be prepared in advance. General guidance is written in Player's Handbook (PHB, p. 189). Basically, you should determine who is surprised when the first round of combat begins. To do so, you should know answers for these questions:

Are creatures trying to hide? They roll Stealth.

Are they successful? Compare results to PC's Passive Perception score.

Are PCs trying to hide? They roll Stealth.

Are they successful? Compare results to creatures' Passive Perception score.

Based on the results you will understand who will take actions in the first round of combat and who will not. I also put my notes for the encounters when circumstances may differ from the standard procedure.

Third step will help you to understand how to use creatures in combat. Where should they stand? What course of action will be most efficient and logical depending on the lore? Who do they need to attack? Will they fight to the death? Will they flee or surrender? I also put more detailed explanation on how some creature's abilities and traits work.

## Abbreviations and Font Styles

The following abbreviations are used throughout this guide:

PHB = Player's Handbook

MM = Monster Manual

DMG = Dungeon Master's Guide

SCAG = Sword Coast Adventurer's Guide

XGE = Xanathar's Guide to Everything

VGTM = Volo's Guide to Monsters

MTOF = Mordenkainen's Tome of Foes

WDMM = Waterdeep: Dungeon of the Mad Mage

WDH = Waterdeep: Dragon Heist

PC(s) = Player Character(s)

AC = Armor Class

DC = Difficulty Class

CR = Challenge Rating

hp = hit points

gp = gold piece(s)

AoE = Area of Effect

RAW = Rules as Written

The following font styles are used throughout this guide:

**Bold** style is used for the creatures' names

*Italic* style is used for the Spells.

***Bold Italic*** style is used for the Abilities and Traits.

## Level 13: Trobriand's Graveyard

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This level is designed for four 12<sup>th</sup> level PCs. If you have more than 4 PCs, you can add more creatures or maximize their hp to make combat encounters more challenging. If you have less PCs, then you can decrease the number of creatures in combat or use less optimal tactics. All creatures in Encounter Difficulty section are compared to 12<sup>th</sup> level PCs.

### Area 1

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#### Encounter Difficulty

1 **Bore Worm** (CR 16, MM, p. 255, with changes)  
= 4 PCs

#### Surprise

Follow the standard procedure to determine surprise.

#### Creatures' Tactics

Bore worm is construct. It won't communicate, flee, surrender or take captives.

Make the **Bore Worm** use *Multiattack* against nearest PC.

### Area 2a

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#### Encounter Difficulty

4 **Scaladar** (CR 8, WDMM, p. 315) = 12 PCs  
12 **Arbalests** (CR 1, MM, p. 224) = 2 PCs

#### Surprise

Follow the standard procedure to determine surprise.

#### Creatures' Tactics

Constructs won't communicate, flee, surrender, take captives or use any kind of tactics.

Make the **Scaladar** and the **Arbalests** use *Multiattack* against nearest PC.

### Area 2b

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#### Encounter Difficulty

1 **Hobgoblin Captain** (CR 3, MM, p. 185) = 1 PC  
7 **Hobgoblins** (CR 1/2, MM, p. 185) = 1 PC

#### Surprise

Follow the standard procedure to determine surprise.

#### Creatures' Tactics

Hobgoblins are the race of disciplined warriors oriented on conquest and war. According to VGTM, all goblinoids believe that their god Maglubiyet is the only true god. You can make hobgoblins focus on clerics and paladins in combat. Hobgoblins can negotiate and take captives but would prefer glorious death rather than flee or surrender.

Make the **Hobgoblin Captain** use *Leadership* at the beginning of the combat, so all its allies within 30 ft. get bonus to attacks and saves. On the next rounds make it use *Multiattack* against less armored PC within 5 ft. of one of its allies to get benefit of *Martial Advantage*.

Make the **Hobgoblins** focus on less armored PC within 5 ft. of one of their allies to get benefit of *Martial Advantage*.

### Area 4

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#### Encounter Difficulty

1 **Shockerstomper** (CR 14, WDMM, p. 174) = 4 PCs

#### Surprise

Follow the standard procedure to determine surprise.

#### Creatures' Tactics

Constructs won't communicate, flee, surrender, take captives or use any kind of tactics.

Make the **Shokerstomper** use *Multiattack* against nearest PC.

## Area 5

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### Encounter Difficulty

10 **Lava Children** (CR 3, WDMM, p. 313) = 5 PCs

### Surprise

As a DM you can make PCs surprised when the **Lava Children** emerge from the walls.

### Creatures' Tactics

Lava children are born in the Fountains of Creation, also known as the Plane of Magma, which is wedged between the Elemental Planes of Earth and Fire (PHB, p. 300). They can communicate, flee, surrender and take captives to eat them later.

Make the **Lava Children** use *Multiattack* against PCs wearing metal armor or shield to get Advantage from *Metal Immunity* trait. They are immune to damage from both magical and non-magical metal weapons, so it's practical to focus on spellcasters. If the **Lava Child** has a chance, make it hide inside the metal piles between its turns. They can also flee using this trait.

## Area 6

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### Encounter Difficulty

3 **Scaladar** (CR 8, WDMM, p. 315) = 9 PCs

### Surprise

Follow the standard procedure to determine surprise.

### Creatures' Tactics

See [Area 2a](#).

## Area 7b

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### Encounter Difficulty

1 **Archmage** (CR 12, MM, p. 342, with changes) = 6 PCs

1 **Shield Guardian** (CR 7, MM, p. 271) = 2 PCs

### Surprise

Follow the standard procedure to determine surprise.

### Creatures' Tactics

Archmage is intelligent enough to negotiate, flee, surrender or take captives.

Shield guardians are constructs created to protect their masters. They can't communicate and won't flee, surrender or take captives unless master gives such an order.

Assume that the **Archmage** pre-casted *Mage Armor* and *Mind Blank* before the combat. Start the fight with *Time Stop*. It will give the **Archmage** an opportunity to take minimum 2 turns without interruption. During the first turn make it cast *Mirror Image*. On the next turn make it cast *Wall of Force* trapping inside the dome one or two martial PCs. If it has one more turn, use it to cast 6<sup>th</sup> level *Cone of Cold*, which will end *Time Stop*. If it has more free turns you can make it cast *Fire Shield* before *Cone of Cold*. The **Archmage** has resistance to damage from spells already, but additional damage to melee attackers might be helpful. Continue casting *Cone of Cold* or 4<sup>th</sup> level *Lightning Bolt* spells targeting as many PCs as possible. Use *Counterspell* against harmful spells. If you decide that it's time to flee, cast *Teleport*.

The **Shield Guardian's Bound** trait only works if the **Archmage** is within 60 ft., so it must always stay within this distance. *Spell Storing* trait stores *Greater Invisibility*. It is great defensive spell, so make the **Shield Guardian** cast it on the **Archmage** in the first round of the combat. On the next rounds make the **Shield Guardian** use *Multiattack* against less armored PC. Use *Shield* to protect the **Archmage** within 5 ft.



## Area 8

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### Encounter Difficulty

9 **Lava Children** (CR 3, WDMM, p. 313) = 5 PCs

### Surprise

As a DM you can make PCs surprised when the **Lava Children** emerge from the walls.

### Creatures' Tactics

See [Area 5](#).

## Area 11a

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### Encounter Difficulty

1 **Hobgoblin Warlord** (CR 6, MM, p. 185) = 2 PCs

5 **Death Dogs** (CR 1, MM, p. 321) = 1 PC

4 **Hobgoblins** (CR 1/2, MM, p. 185) = 1 PC

### Surprise

Follow the standard procedure to determine surprise. **Two-Headed** trait gives +5 to **Death Dog's** Passive Perception score (see Passive Checks, PHB, p. 175).

### Creatures' Tactics

See [Area 2b](#) for general description of hobgoblins.

Death dogs are hateful monsters. They don't communicate, surrender or take captives, but they can flee.

Make the **Hobgoblin Warlord** use **Leadership** at the beginning of the combat, so all its allies within 30 ft. get bonus to attacks and saves. On the next rounds make it use **Multiattack** with against less armored PC within 5 ft. of one of its allies to get benefit of **Martial Advantage**. Make it use **Shield Bash** until PC gets prone to get Advantage on **Longsword** attack rolls. Don't forget to use **Parry** to avoid melee hits.

Make the **Death Dogs** use **Multiattack** against nearest or Prone PC.

See [Area 2b](#) for **Hobgoblin's** tactics.

## Area 11b

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### Encounter Difficulty

6 **Hobgoblins** (CR 1/2, MM, p. 185) = 1 PC

### Surprise

Follow the standard procedure to determine surprise.

### Creatures' Tactics

See [Area 2b](#) for general description of hobgoblins.

According to WDMM, these **Hobgoblins** spend all their Actions shooting from **Flame Cannons**. Don't forget that **Flame Cannon** attacks work with **Martial Advantage**, so make the **Hobgoblins** focus on PCs within 5 ft. of its allies.