

MONSTERS' GUIDE TO COMBAT ENCOUNTERS

*For Dungeon of the Mad Mage
Level 14: Arcturiadoom*

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About this Guide

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.

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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 14: Arcturiadoom

This level is designed for four 13th 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 13th level PCs.

Area 1a

Encounter Difficulty

1 **Bore Worm** (CR 16, MM, p. 255, with changes)
= 3 PCs

2 **Drow Mages** (CR 7, MM, p. 126) = 4 PCs

2 **Quasits** (CR 1, MM, p. 50) = 1 PC

Note. These creatures are not going to attack the party without reason.

Surprise

Follow the standard procedure to determine surprise.

Creatures' Tactics

Bore worm is a construct. It doesn't follow any kind of tactics and won't communicate, flee, surrender or take captives.

According to MM and MTOF, drow are selfish, cruel and treacherous creatures, who believe in their supremacy over all other. They especially hate surface elves, so you can make them focus on elf or half-elf PCs in combat. Drow can negotiate, flee, surrender or take captives.

Quasits are lesser demons, who plot mischief and wickedness from the shadows, because they lack the power to bring destruction. Demons can't be killed outside the Abyss, so they don't fear death and won't surrender. Quasits can communicate and flee, but they won't show mercy to fallen enemies taking them as captives.

Make the **Bore Worm** use *Multiattack* against nearest creature. It can attack the **Drow Mages**, the **Quasits** and the party, whoever is closer.

Assume that the **Drow Mage** pre-casted *Mage Armor*. At the beginning of the fight make the **Drow Mage** cast *Greater Invisibility*. It requires keeping concentration which means the **Drow Mage** won't be able to use *Cloudkill* or *Evard's Black Tentacles*. On the next turns make it cast *Lightning Bolt* using 5th and 4th level spell slots targeting as many PCs as possible. Don't forget to use *Shield* against attacks.

The **Quasit** can fly so make it stay away of melee range. Assume that the **Quasit** used *Invisibility* before the fight. At the first round of combat make it use *Scare* against martial PC. Next round you can make it use *Invisibility* again in order to use *Claws* against less armored PC with Advantage next turn.

Area 2a

Encounter Difficulty

1 **Deformed Duergar** (CR 1, MM, p. 122) = 1 PC

Note. This is easy encounter, so you can skip it.

Surprise

Follow the standard procedure to determine surprise.

Creatures' Tactics

Duergar are greedy race of Underdark slavers. They hate surface dwarves, so you can make them focus on such PCs. According to MTOF, duergar deity Laduguer pledged to archdevil Asmodeus alliance against drow goddess Lolth, so they can focus on drow PCs also. This creature became completely insane because of the transformation, so it won't negotiate, flee, surrender or take captives.

According to WDMM the **Deformed Duergar** used *Enlarge* before the fight. Make it use *War Pick* as an Action and *Javelin* as a Bonus Action against nearest PC.

Area 2c

Encounter Difficulty

4 **Carrion Crawlers** (CR 2, MM, p. 37) = 1 PC

Note. This is easy encounter, so you can skip it.

Surprise

Follow the standard procedure to determine surprise. **Keen Smell** trait grants +5 bonus to **Carrion Crawler's** Passive Perception.

Creatures' Tactics

Carrion crawler are patient predators. They aggressively attack any creature that trespasses on their territory, or disturb its feasting. They can't communicate, flee, surrender or take captives.

Make the **Carrion Crawler** use **Multiattack** against nearest PC. Don't forget, that Paralyzed condition (PHB, p. 291) grants Advantage to all attacks against affected creature, and all hits from 5 ft. become Critical hits.

Area 3

Encounter Difficulty

2 **Fire Giants** (CR 9, MM, p. 149) = 6 PCs

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

Surprise

Follow the standard procedure to determine surprise.

Creatures' Tactics

Fire giants are master crafters and organized warriors. Humanoids conquered in war become serfs to the fire giants. Fire giants are intelligent enough to communicate, flee, surrender or take captives.

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 **Fire Giant** use **Multiattack** against less-armored PC. Use **Rock** only if there is no chance to attack in melee. The **Fire Giant** has very high bonus to Athletic skill, so it can Grapple and Shove effectively. They can move Grappled creature without speed penalty if its size Medium or less.

The **Hobgoblin's Longbow** and **Longsword** attacks are identical, so you can make them attack from the distance. **Martial Advantage** works with any weapon attacks, so focus on PCs standing near their allies. Note, that when the **Hobgoblin** uses **Longbow** its AC is 16.

Area 9a

Encounter Difficulty

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

Note. Fight in this area alerts creatures from [Area 9c](#).

Surprise

Follow the standard procedure to determine surprise.

Creatures' Tactics

See [Area 3](#).

Area 9c

Encounter Difficulty

1 **Hobgoblin Captain** (CR 3, MM, p. 185) = 1 PC

20 **Hobgoblins** (CR 1/2, MM, p. 185) = 2 PCs

Note. Fight in this area alerts creatures from [Area 9a](#), [Area 11](#), [Area 16](#) and [Area 18](#).

Surprise

Follow the standard procedure to determine surprise.

Creatures' Tactics

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*.

See [Area 3](#) for the tactics of **Hobgoblins**.

Area 11

Encounter Difficulty

1 **Fire Giant** (CR 9, MM, p. 149) = 3 PCs

Note. Fight in this area might alert creatures from [Area 12a](#) and [Areas 12b, 12c and 12d](#).

Surprise

Follow the standard procedure to determine surprise.

Creatures' Tactics

See [Area 3](#).

Area 12a

Encounter Difficulty

5 **Hell Hounds** (CR 3, MM, p. 182) = 3 PCs

Note. Fight in this area might alert creatures from [Area 11](#) and [Areas 12b, 12c and 12d](#).

Surprise

Follow the standard procedure to determine surprise. *Keen Hearing and Smell* trait grants +5 bonus to **Hell Hound's** Passive Perception.

Creatures' Tactics

Hell hounds are fiends taken the form of powerful dogs. They understand Abyssal, but can't speak, which means that creatures with Telepathy or similar ability can communicate with them. It looks like that hell hounds don't reborn if they die at Material Plane, so they can flee, and it is up to DM if they can surrender. Hell hounds won't take captives because of insatiable hunger.

Make the **Hell Hound** use *Fire Breath* targeting as many PCs as possible. If it isn't available, make it use *Bite* against less armored PC standing within 5 ft. of the **Hell Hound's** ally to gain benefit of *Pack Tactics* trait.

Area 12b, 12c and 12d

Encounter Difficulty

1 **Fire Giant** (CR 9, MM, p. 149) = 3 PCs

Surprise

Follow the standard procedure to determine surprise.

Creatures' Tactics

See [Area 3](#). The **Fire Giant** is immune to fire damage, so you can make it Grapple PC and put him or her burn into the forge for 55 (10d10) fire damage.

Area 15

Encounter Difficulty

1 **Fire Giant** (CR 9, MM, p. 149) = 3 PCs

3 **Smoke Mephits** (CR 1/4, MM, p. 215) = 1 PC

Note. Fight in this area alerts creatures from [Area 16](#) and [Area 18](#).

Surprise

Follow the standard procedure to determine surprise.

Creatures' Tactics

Mephits are capricious creatures native to the elemental planes (PHB, p. 300). They can negotiate, flee and surrender but they have no reasons to take captives.

See [Area 3](#) for the **Fire Giant's** tactics.

The **Mephits** can fly so make them stay away of melee reach and use *Cinder Breath*, targeting as many PCs as possible. If it's not available, make them use *Claws* against less armored PC.

Area 16

Encounter Difficulty

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

Note. Fight in this area alerts creature from [Area 15](#).

Surprise

Follow the standard procedure to determine surprise.

Creatures' Tactics

See [Area 3](#).

Area 18

Encounter Difficulty

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

Note. Fight in this area alerts creature from [Area 15](#).

Surprise

Follow the standard procedure to determine surprise.

Creatures' Tactics

See [Area 3](#).

Area 19a

Encounter Difficulty

1 **Animated Stove** (CR 3, WDMM, p. 186) = 1 PC

Surprise

Follow the standard procedure to determine surprise.

Creatures' Tactics

Animated stove is a construct. It won't communicate, flee, surrender or take captives.

Make the **Animated Stove** use **Belch Fire** if it's available. Otherwise use **Slam** against nearest PC.

Area 20

Encounter Difficulty

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

Note. Fight in this area alerts creatures from [Area 32b](#).

Surprise

Follow the standard procedure to determine surprise.

Creatures' Tactics

See [Area 3](#).

Area 23a

Encounter Difficulty

1 **Umber Hulk** (CR 5, MM, p. 292) = 1 PC

Surprise

As a DM you can make transforming umber hulk make the party surprised.

Creatures' Tactics

Umber hulks are underground ambushers with terrifying gaze. They have their own language, so PCs under effect of *Tongues* spell can communicate with them. Umber hulks can flee but won't surrender or take captives.

Confusing Gaze works this way. Each PC that starts turn within 30 ft. of the **Umber Hulk** must avert his or her eyes, which effectively inflicts Blinded condition (PHB, p. 290), or make DC 15 Charisma saving throw. Surprised PCs can't avert their eyes. On failed save PC can't take Reaction and rolls d8 to determine what to do this round. Make the **Umber Hulk** use **Multiattack** against less-armored or Blinded PC. If you decide that it is time to flee, make the **Umber Hulk** use **Tunneler** trait to burrow through the wall or floor to run away.

Area 23b

Encounter Difficulty

1 **Animated Armor** (CR 1, MM, p. 19) = 1 PC

Surprise

As a DM, you can make the party surprised when **Animated Armor** assembles.

Creatures' Tactics

Animated armor is a construct. It won't communicate, flee, surrender or take captives.

Make the **Animated Armor** use *Multiattack* against nearest PC.

Area 23c

Encounter Difficulty

1 **Two-Headed Rat** (CR 1, MM, p. 321) = 1 PC

Surprise

Follow the standard procedure to determine surprise. **Two-Headed** trait gives +5 to **Two-Headed Rat's** Passive Perception score.

Creatures' Tactics

Giant two-headed rat won't communicate, flee, surrender or take captives.

Make the **Two-Headed Rat** use *Multiattack* against nearest PC.

Area 25

Encounter Difficulty

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

Surprise

Follow the standard procedure to determine surprise.

Creatures' Tactics

See [Area 3](#).

Area 28

Encounter Difficulty

1 **Hook Horror** (CR 3, MM, p. 189) = 1 PC

Surprise

Follow the standard procedure to determine surprise. **Keen Hearing** trait grants +5 bonus to **Hook Horror's** Passive Perception.

Creatures' Tactics

Hook horrors are pack predators of the Underdark. They have their own language, so PCs under effect of *Tongues* spell or similar ability can communicate with them. Creature polymorphed into hook horror by Arcturia's trap must attack nearest creature it sees.

Make the **Hook Horror** use *Multiattack* against nearest PC.

Area 29

Encounter Difficulty

1 **Drow Mage** (CR 7, MM, p. 126) = 2 PCs

1 **Shadow Demon** (CR 4, MM, p. 50) = 1 PC

Note. These creatures are not going to attack the party without reason.

Surprise

Follow the standard procedure to determine surprise.

Creatures' Tactics

See [Area 1a](#) for the tactics of the **Drow Mage**.

Demons are the embodiment of chaos and evil existing only to destroy. They can't truly die on the Material Plane, so they don't surrender or flee. They can communicate via **Telepathy** or in Abyssal language. They don't take captives and show no mercy to fallen enemies.

If PCs aren't using sources of bright light, make the **Shadow Demon** Hide as Bonus action using *Shadow Stealth* and then use **Claws** against less

armored PC. **Incorporeal Movement** trait allows the **Shadow Demon** to hide inside the walls and under the floor between turns taking 1d10 force damage. This tactic forces the party to use Ready action and lose benefit of Extra Attack or keep Concentration on readied spells.

Area 30

Encounter Difficulty

5 **Carrion Ogre** (CR 2, WDM, p. 328) = 1 PC

Note. This creature is not going to attack the party without reason.

Surprise

Follow the standard procedure to determine surprise.

Creatures' Tactics

Carrion ogre won't negotiate, surrender or take captives, but it can flee.

Make the **Carrion Ogre** use **Multiattack** against nearest PC. Don't forget, that Paralyzed condition (PHB, p. 291) grants Advantage to all attacks against affected creature, and all hits from 5 ft. become Critical hits.

Area 32a

Encounter Difficulty

30 **Hobgoblins** (CR 1/2, MM, p. 185) = 3 PCs

Note. Fight in this area alerts creature from [Area 32b](#) and [Area 32c](#).

Surprise

Follow the standard procedure to determine surprise.

Creatures' Tactics

See [Area 3](#). You can make the **Hobgoblins** use Grapple plus Shove attacks to keep PCs inside the area of *Antimagic Field*.

Area 32b

Encounter Difficulty

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

Note. Fight in this area alerts creature from [Area 32a](#) and [Area 32c](#).

Surprise

Follow the standard procedure to determine surprise.

Creatures' Tactics

See [Area 3](#). You can make the **Hobgoblins** use Grapple plus Shove attacks to keep PCs inside the area of *Antimagic Field*.

Area 32c

Encounter Difficulty

2 **Hobgoblin Captains** (CR 3, MM, p. 185) = 1 PC

Note. Fight in this area alerts creature from [Area 32a](#) and [Area 32b](#). They can also call for the help of the **Hobgoblin Warlord** from [Area 33](#).

Surprise

Follow the standard procedure to determine surprise.

Creatures' Tactics

See [Area 9c](#). You can make the **Hobgoblin Captains** use Grapple plus Shove attacks to keep PCs inside the area of *Antimagic Field*.

Area 33

Encounter Difficulty

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

Note. The **Hobgoblin Warlord** shouldn't fight without its allies, so make it join forces with creatures from [Area 32c](#).

Surprise

Follow the standard procedure to determine surprise.

Creatures' Tactics

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 falls down to get Advantage on *Longsword* attack rolls. Don't forget to use *Parry* to avoid melee hits.

Area 36

Encounter Difficulty

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

Surprise

Follow the standard procedure to determine surprise.

Creatures' Tactics

See [Area 9c](#) and [Area 3](#).

Area 39a

Encounter Difficulty

1 **Rakshasa** (CR 13, MM, p. 257) = 3 PCs
Note. This creature is not going to attack the party without reason.

Surprise

Follow the standard procedure to determine surprise.

Creatures' Tactics

Rakshasas are fiends originated from Nine Hells (PHB, p. 300). They can't truly die in Material Plane, so they won't flee or surrender. They can communicate in Common and Infernal and can take captives if they need.

Make the **Rakshasa** cast *Dominate Monster* on martial PC and command him or her to kill other PC wielding magic weapon. On the next rounds

make the **Rakshasa** use *Multiattack* against PC wielding magic weapon, because *Limited Spell Immunity* protects it from spellcasters.

Area 39c

Encounter Difficulty

2 **Young Blue Dragons** (CR 9, MM, p. 86) = 6 PCs
Note. These creatures are not going to attack the party without reason.

Surprise

Follow the standard procedure to determine surprise.

Creatures' Tactics

Dragons are intelligent enough to negotiate, flee, surrender and take captives.

The **Young Blue Dragons** can fly so make them stay in the air and use *Lightning Breath* targeting as many PCs as possible. If *Lightning Breath* is unavailable use *Multiattack* against less armored PC and fly away from melee reach.

Area 40b

Encounter Difficulty

1 **Nalfeshnee** (CR 13, MM, p. 50) = 3 PCs

Surprise

Follow the standard procedure to determine surprise.

Creatures' Tactics

See [Area 29](#) for general description of demons.

The **Nalfeshnee** can fly so make it use hit and run tactics and stay in the air between its turns. Demons are protected from magic very well thanks to resistance from cold, fire and lightning and Advantage on saves from *Magic Resistance* trait, so make the **Nalfeshnee** use *Multiattack* against PC with strong ranged attacks.