DARK EAGLE GAMES

PRESENTS

Monster Tactics

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Introduction

Greetings! This guide is my 19th. For this one, I offer a list of tactics for monsters that will make your encounters fresh and original.

Far too often, a GM will play monsters encounters always the same. They charge up, semi-random targeting enemies, and then fight to the death.

Incorporating this one change to your gaming will greatly affect the way your encounters feel to your players. Combat will be less redundant if the GM takes into account the monster's motivations, unique logic, and even prejudices on the battlefield.

Work in Progress

As always, like all of my guides, I consider this a work in progress. Hopefully, I will continue to hunt out typos, mistakes, but more importantly, expand the content.

I want to say thank you so much for your support. If you want to give feedback, I can be reached at jcwmymail@gmail.com.

My Growing Collection

If you like this guide, please check out my other work. Together they give content for my Poverty style worlds.

https://www.drivethrurpg.com/browse/pub/16630/John-Walts?src=guides

Legal

Then I must give thanks to the OGL for making such content legal. This guide is made in compliance with the OGL. Please find the OGL at the end of this document.

Content marked as the following [**bold print**] can be found in either the SRD or one of the core rule books of the 5th edition of the world's most popular pen and paper RPG.

The Future

I have lots of outlines, notes, adventures, worlds, creatures, lore, and more.

With your support, I hope to publish content like this guide with your support. With your purchase, my goal is to acquire more art for my projects and spend more time producing content.

The art is an unrelated piece I commissioned for a race in development

Monster's Tactics

Ever have this come up? After the Orc drops a hero, it now has a choice. It can murder the Alex the dying ranger, attack Bob the armored fighter, or move to Clark the healing cleric, or just sit around doing nothing.

What to do?

Some GM would go random. They roll a die to choose between them. In the GM mind, might as well make it random. After all, they don't want to make it seem personal. Especially true when it comes to murdering the fallen hero.

Anyone who has been following my many guides will realize I am against random choices when there is a better way. I believe this guide offers a better way.

Monster Logic

The first thing we realize is that monsters should have their own logic that governs their actions. As us being humans, we share priorities and thought processes. As a species, when compared to the ant, who lives and dies for the queen, it's obvious we have different logic. The motivations differences between the human vs ant are plain and simple.

My argument is that as GM, in most situations, we apply our human logic to the monsters we play. Sometimes the differences will be subtle. Other times, obvious.

I would suggest that for most of the fantasy creatures they should have different logic and motivations. Combine, they would create their own choices on a battlefield that on the surface would seem illogical to a human. Regardless, their effects would make unique and memorable encounters that do not feel random.

Whether you plan these encounters out or make them on the fly, you should record the motivations, logic, and tactics of your monsters. In this way, their fighting style will become consistent and feel real. Each time the heroes encounter gnolls, giants, orcs, hags, and other creatures, there should be a through-line in their actions. A fight against a mob of goblins should substantially feel different from a mob of gnolls.

Obviously, as a busy GM, we don't want to design all of the distinctions of these creatures that would make their logic unique. What I present here is a launching point for quick monster tactics that you can mix and match to make your encounters become memorable.

Monster Tactics

During preparation, the GM could assign the creatures a simple **Tactical Style**. Made a notation in your [**Monster Manuel**] for each creature. It's that simple.

I provide my own list, but you can expand on it. Each one defines a simple tactical choice the creature will make in combat. You then use these to role-play your monsters in combat situations using their unique tactics.

Then when the monsters have a choice for what the monster will do, now it no longer feels personal or random. If the GM uses the Tactical Style, it's how they fight! If the creature must choose between murdering Steve the Ranger or attacking Bob the fighter, it's the only logical choice for

it. And the choice will become constant.

Meta is Easier

For many of these tactics, it's easier to go on the raw metadata as GM instead of deciding the monster's perception. For example, Macho monsters target enemies with high strength. A simple trick would be to take note of the Strength Score of each hero and then use that list to prioritize their targets.

Degrees

All of this can be to a degree as well. They are your monsters. For me, I put a "-" sign in front of mild motivations and a big "+" for major motivations.

During a campaign, as the heroes learn the tactics of the enemies, they can use this information against the villains. They can come up with their own tactics depending on who they fight.

Also, do not forget you can mix and match them. There is no reason you cannot have Macho and Relentless, Teamwork and Racist, or Vindictive and Cowardly. In fact, give monsters two or more. I do.

I hope this helps some GM in their play. I would love to hear from readers on the styles they use.

Situational

Another GM suggested that you can even change their tactics based on the makeup of the group or encounter. A creature might have 1 tactic when solo but another in a group. Or when they feel confident vs overwhelmed. All of this is true. It's more complex than I would normally make it, but I definitely recognize times I would use this change up with my encounters. Monsters doing an ambush would be much more confident than when surprised.

Different Worlds

If you have more than one world setting, I would suggest changing up the attributes in each world.

In this way, the Bugbears of one world play differently than the others. It will make your campaign setting feel special.

The List

Here is my growing list of monster characteristics, motivations, and logical choices, that I collectively call Monster Tactics.

This list is ever expanding as I come up with new and interesting strategies for my monsters to use.

Monster's Tactics

Archery-X. Their priority is to take out archers even willing to take attacks of opportunity in order to reach them.
Armor-X. Their priority is to take out low AC enemies even willing to take attacks of opportunity in order to reach them.
Authority. Protect the leader. Others will die to help the leader to escape.
Bullies. If these see enemies missing them they will target them first. Hoping to break morale of the enemy or distract them by needing to care for the weak. If they notice someone badly wounded, they will focus on them.
Captures. First chance they get, they will capture the fallen.
Caring. These monsters will seek to save their own fallen. They will use actions to drag them to safety.
Cowardly. They will always target the weakest enemies. When they have a choice of two enemies, compare strength scores. When forced to fight the strong, they will dodge or withdraw in the hope of wasting their actions.
Fey-X. Their priority is to take out Fey even willing to take attacks of opportunity in order to reach them.
Flexible. Extra will help with archery or engage 2:1. When one opens up, they will switch to attack an open target.
Group. The morale of the group is all that matters. When it breaks, they all leave.
Healing-X. Their priority is to take out Healers even willing to take attacks of opportunity in order to reach them.
Hive. When it's time to retreat, the wounded will sacrifice their lives to allow the less wounded to escape.
Independent. They do not use team tactics. Even as a group encounter, they act like they are alone ignoring the others.
Individual. When the individual gets in a bad spot, they will seek to withdraw or play dead.
Inflexible. When these monsters cannot fight the enemies they want, they will dodge and maneuver to get there.
Looters. The first chance they get, they will loot the fallen.
Macho. They want to fight the strongest enemies.
Magic-X. Their priority is to take out spell-casters even willing to take attacks of opportunity in order to reach them.
M2M (Man-to-Man). They like to fight 1:1. The extras will hold back and use archery or cut off retreat.
Mob. They always want fight 3:1 or more. If one opens up, they will seek to join a mob.
Mono. They will try to engage the heroes one at a time creating 1:1 fights as they watch. If others interfere, they might try to separate the heroes so they can enjoy the battle.
Murders. The first chance they get, they will kill the fallen.
Organized. They will use complex tactics and teamwork to bring down their enemies. Use your best judgment on their actions.
Patient. Not in a rush, they will often take their time. When selecting a new target, they might move carefully into battle.
Reactive. They will typically attack whoever attacks them. When they have a choice, they might lose the round waiting to see if someone attacks them.
Relentless. Keep attacking the same target no matter what! Even if they try to withdraw, they can pursue them.
Simple. If it worked last round, they do it again. If they miss, they try a new target.
Solo. They like to fight 1 to 1. They will chase their enemies for a round. Extras like to watch.
Unmotivated. In a fight, if no one is attacking them they might wander away especially if wounded.
Vain. Their priority is to take out high-charisma enemies even willing to take attacks of opportunity in order to reach them.
Vindictive. They will constantly switch targets to whoever hurt them the most.

Examples From Play?

Imagine a party of 4 is traveling and get ambushed by 6 creatures. How does the DM assign the attacks? The following are the tactics I used.

Notes for Wild World

These are my notes as a GM for my world. You are welcome to use them, but it's just an example of how I apply the content above into my game.

Have fun mixing and match or creating your own tactics. In the end, they should be something that could work for the monsters and "make sense" from their world view.

Race	Description
Aarakogra	**Bully & Magic-X**. They focus on those with light armor. Once someone casts a spell, that becomes target number one.
Ankheg	**Flexible & Independent**. When they take 50% damage, they will withdraw back into their tunnels.
Azer	**Team, Relentless, & Healer-X**. They work together and will fight to the death. They recognize healers and will focus their attacks on them.
Banshee	**Independent & Vindictive**. They will attack whomever but when an enemy causes big damage, they will switch to take them down.
Basilisk	**Independent & Hive**. Counter-intuitive, but they attack as if they were by themselves but when the group takes 50% damage, they will collectively withdraw.
Blights	**Authority & Mob**. They will seek to fight 3:1 whoever is closest to them. When they have taken 50% or more damage, many will sacrifice themselves to allow for the leader to retreat.
Bugbears	**Armor-X & Vindictive**. They will go one each, but the extras go for the lowest AC. But when they take big hits, they will switch to those enemies.
Bullywug	**Bullies, Reactive & Looters**. Half will attack at the start targeting the weak as others dodge. But if attacked, they will engage. If any enemies go down, they will swam to loot them.
Cyclops	**Macho & Healing-X**. They focus on the big and strong, but if anyone heals the watchers will engage them.
Doppelgangers	**Magic-X & Caring**. They will focus on Spell-casters taking actions to help drag away their dying.
Drider	**Healing-X & Bullies**. They will focus on attacking those that miss them until they discover the healer in the group.
Dryads	**Fey-X & Caring**. The sisters of the woods have a hatred of the fey kind in battle targeting elves, half-elves, and even gnomes before others. They will heal and protect their fallen in battle.
Duergar	**Authority & Captures**. They will sacrifice themselves to protect their leaders. When an enemy goes down, they will spend time to capture them.
Drow	**Archery-X & Vain.** One each with the extra two focusing on anyone who uses or even carries a bow. Otherwise, they will focus extra attacks on those with high charisma.
Ettercap	**Dull & Unmotivated**. A fairy straightforward fight to the death creatures. However, if some of them are not attacked they might wander away.
Ettins	**Independent & Solo.** They will hunt together but not fight as a group. Those not engaged will watch and even laugh.
Faerie Dragons	**Vain & Individual**. They will attack those with high-charisma and withdraw when wounded.
Gargoyles	**Armor-X & Inflexible**. They will seek to fight 2:1 on the lower AC creatures even taking attacks of opportunity to reach the targets. They are not good at adapting or switching targets.
Goblins	**Magic-X, Cowardly, Individual & Mobs**. Two stand in-front of the fighters dodging and wasting their time while the other four try to kill the spell-casters. When they get wounded, they withdraw a short distance to use their slings.
Grimlocks	**Dull & Armor-X**. In general they do a straightforward fight to the death, but will priorities low AC heroes when given the chance.
Hags	**Vain, Group, and Healer-X**. They target high-charisma creatures first. When they identify healers they go after them. Collectively they retreat as a group when they lose 50% hp.
Harpies	**Group, Capture, & Fey-X**. They will focus on Fey creatures if given the chance. They collectively flee when morale breaks and not before that. They will capture the fallen but only to torture them for several days before murdering them.
Hell Hounds	**Dull & Relentless.** They fight to the death those in-front of them. Once they pick a target, they will use their round to chase them down if they withdraw.
Hippogriff	**Group & Magic-X**. Collective morale breaking together when they take 50% collective damage. They will always target spell-casters given the chance.
Hobgoblins	**Organized & Caring**. One dodges vs the fighter while another shoots at him with a bow. Meanwhile three take on the healer. One in reserves to pull out the fallen.
Kobolds	**Authority & Flexible**. Basic tactics of evenly attacking all targets. They will give their lives to defend the master.
Kuo-Toa	**Simple, Flexible & Group**. Basic tactics of doing what works and trying new things if it isn't working. When morale breaks, they retreat as a group.
Ogres	**Macho & Solo**. Several come forward and attack the strongest as other watch. When the other, weak, heroes interfere the others throw stones at them when they hit and laugh when they miss.
Orcs	**M2M & Solo**. They press forward one on each other while the other two cheer them on. When one of them falls, the reserves steps up to engage.
Sahuagin	**Relentless & Bullies**. They pick the weaker targets and go after them at all cost. Dodging and evading the strong until they can take down the weak.
Skeletons	**Dull & Simple**. While they will fight whoever is in front of them to the death, if they miss 1-2 rounds they will seek a new target to attack.
Troll	**Independent & Bullies**. They go for the weak but do not work as a coordinated group.
Yeti	**Mono & Relentless**. A group of Yetis will fight one at a time, often to the death, while the others watch on.
Zombies	**Relentless & Murdering**. Whoever is the closes they attack. They will chase for a round before giving up. Those that fall, they will stop and eat.

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