

D&D Playtest: How to Play

The adventures that unfold in the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® game take place in your imagination. The Dungeon Master describes environments and circumstances, and you and your fellow players respond by asking questions, describing your characters' actions, and testing your characters' abilities to overcome obstacles and foes. This shared imaginary environment hosts the chambers you explore, the battles you fight, and the encounters you experience.

If you're a player, these rules assume that you have a set of polyhedral dice, a character sheet, and something to take notes with. If you're the DM, you should have dice, a way to take notes, and an adventure, either a published adventure or one of your own creation. You can use whatever visual aids enhance your enjoyment of the game—miniatures, gridded surfaces such as *Dungeon Tiles*, and the like—or use none at all.

Most of this material is directed at an individual player, but the rules are for players and DMs alike.

Basic Rules

You do things in the game by first describing the thing you want your character to do. The DM then responds to your description, and might ask you to use one of your character's ability scores to help determine success. You use your ability scores and their modifiers to interact with the game world in three basic ways: ability checks, attack rolls, and saving throws. All three involve rolling a d20, applying any relevant bonuses and penalties (collectively called modifiers), and comparing the total to a target number. If the total meets or beats that number, the task succeeds. See the "Ability Scores" section for details on each ability and for how an ability's modifier is determined.

Ability Checks

An ability check is a test to see if your innate talent and training are enough to overcome a challenge. Most of the time, you must make an

ability check because the DM has determined that an action you want to attempt has a chance of failure. The outcome is uncertain, and your DM turns to the dice to determine your fate.

When you need to make an ability check, your DM asks you to make it using an ability of his or her choice. The DM chooses the ability that applies best to the task at hand.

To make an ability check, first look at the relevant ability on your character sheet. The ability has both a score and a modifier. Then follow these steps.

1. Roll the die. Roll a d20 and add the relevant ability's modifier.

2. Apply bonuses and penalties. If a class feature, a spell, or some other effect gives you a bonus or a penalty to this check, apply it to your roll.

3. Announce the total. Tell the DM the result of your check.

When you make an ability check, your DM picks a target number, called a Difficulty Class (DC), for the check. Your DM has details on how to determine DCs. The more difficult a task, the higher its DC.

If your check result is equal to or greater than the DC, you succeed. Otherwise, you fail. When you succeed, your action works as intended. When you fail, you either make no progress or perhaps suffer a setback.

Contests

A contest pits two or more characters or creatures against each other, with the outcome determined by each contender's luck and talent. Contests are a form of ability check, except that instead of matching your roll against a DC, both you and the creature you are opposing make a roll. You then compare the two results to see who succeeds.

When to Have a Contest. Contests arise when two creatures attempt to do the same thing and only one can succeed, such as if both you and a bandit attempt to snatch up a magic ring that has fallen on the floor. In other cases, you might attempt something that another creature

actively opposes. If you attempt to push open a door that an orc holds shut from the other side, you make an ability check to open the door, and the orc makes a check to keep it shut.

Resolving a Contest. A contest uses the same rules as an ability check, except that more than one creature makes a check. Any bonuses and penalties you apply when making an ability check that is not a contest also apply to contests involving that ability.

The creature with the higher check result wins the contest. The creature either succeeds at its action or prevents its opponent from succeeding.

If the contest ends in a tie, the situation remains the same as it was before the contest. Thus, one contestant might win the contest by default. If you and a bandit tie in a contest to snatch a ring, neither one of you grabs it. If you tie in a contest to push open a door held shut by an orc, the door remains shut.

Likewise, if you tie in a contest to hide from another creature, your situation with respect to that creature does not change. If the creature was already aware of you before the contest, you fail to hide. If it was not aware of you before the contest, you remain hidden.

Attack Rolls

When you meet a ferocious monster, you likely will need to attack it to defeat it. An attack roll is similar to an ability check (you roll a d20 and add modifiers), except that you compare the result of your attack roll to your target's Armor Class (AC). To hit the target, your result must be equal to or greater than the AC. If you hit, you deal damage with your attack, reducing your target's hit points. When a creature drops to 0 hit points, it typically falls to the ground, dying.

Additional rules for attacks and taking damage are provided in the "Combat" section.

Saving Throws

A saving throw, or save, represents an attempt to resist a spell, a trap, a poison, a disease, or a similar threat. The rules and the DM tell you when to make a saving throw; it is not something you do at will.

When you make a saving throw, follow these steps.

1. Roll the die. Roll a d20 and add the relevant ability's modifier. The rules or the DM will tell you what ability to use.

2. Apply bonuses and penalties. If a class feature, a spell, or some other effect gives you a bonus or a penalty to this saving throw, apply it to your current total.

3. Announce the total. Tell the DM the result of your saving throw. The DM then compares that result to a DC to determine success or failure. The effect you attempt to resist has a DC, and the effect states what happens if you succeed or fail.

Advantage and Disadvantage

Sometimes you have an edge, an advantage, in a situation. At other times, circumstances conspire against you and impose a disadvantage on you.

When the rules say you have advantage or disadvantage on an ability check, an attack roll, or a saving throw, you roll a second d20 when making that roll. You use the higher of the two rolls to determine your result if you have advantage and the lower roll if you have disadvantage.

No matter how many times you gain advantage or disadvantage on the same roll, you roll only one additional d20.

If you have advantage and disadvantage on the same roll, the advantage and the disadvantage cancel each other out. This rule applies even when you have advantage or disadvantage from multiple sources. For example, if two effects give you advantage on a roll and one effect gives you disadvantage, you have neither of them for that roll.

You usually gain advantage or disadvantage through the use of special abilities and spells. Your DM might also determine that circumstances are in your favor and grant you advantage, or that they are not in your favor and impose disadvantage.

As described in the rules on combat, you can take certain actions—such as the dodge, help, and hinder actions—to gain advantage or impose disadvantage.

Ability Scores

Characters in D&D have six abilities: Strength, Dexterity, Constitution, Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma, as well as a score attached to each ability. Your ability score describes in broad terms your talent, training, and competence when you do things related to that ability. The higher an ability score, the better your character is at using that ability. Your abilities, in many ways, act as your character's foundation and set the stage for your adventuring career.

A typical monster has the same six abilities and follows the same rules as a character for the use of its abilities, but a monster relies on its abilities far less than an adventurer does.

A score of 10 or 11 in an ability is average for a human adult. A score of 18 is the highest that a normal person usually reaches. Adventurers can have scores as high as 20, and monsters and divine beings can have scores as high as 30.

Ability Modifiers

Ability scores govern the many things your character can do. You use abilities to make attacks, to explore your environment, to overcome obstacles and hazards, and to interact with other creatures.

Each of your ability scores has a modifier. When you attempt to do things with an ability and the DM asks you to roll a die, you almost always use your ability modifier—a bonus or a penalty based on your ability score—to help determine your chance of success. Attack rolls, ability checks, and saving throws all use ability modifiers.

Your modifier for a particular ability is your ability score minus 10 and divided by 2 (round down). So, if you have a Strength score of 15, your Strength modifier is +2.

Ability Score	Ability Modifier
1	–5
2–3	–4
4–5	–3
6–7	–2
8–9	–1
10–11	+0
12–13	+1
14–15	+2
16–17	+3
18–19	+4
20–21	+5
22–23	+6
24–25	+7
26–27	+8
28–29	+9
30	+10

Strength

Strength measures bodily power, athletic training, and the extent to which you can exert raw physical force.

Any character who fights in hand-to-hand combat can benefit from a high Strength. Fighters and other warriors, therefore, prefer high Strength scores.

Ability Checks

A Strength check involves one of the following tasks or an improvised task that relies on athleticism or physical might.

Break an Object. Whenever you need to break an object, such as a door or a rope that binds you, make a Strength check.

Climb. You make a Strength check when you're attempting to climb a sheer or slippery cliff, avoid hazards while scaling a wall, or cling to a surface while something is trying to knock you off.

Jump. When you attempt to jump an unusually long distance or pull off a stunt midjump, make a Strength check.

Swim. To swim or stay afloat in treacherous currents, storm-tossed waves, or areas of thick seaweed, make a Strength check. You might also make a Strength check when a creature tries to push or pull you underwater or otherwise interfere with your swimming.

Attack Rolls

You add your Strength modifier to your attack roll and your damage roll when you attack with a Strength-based weapon, such as a mace or a battleaxe.

Saving Throws

The DM commonly asks you to use Strength when you make a saving throw to resist being pushed against your will, knock aside a boulder that is rolling toward you, catch a collapsing ceiling, or grab onto a ledge to keep from falling.

Carrying Capacity

Your Strength score determines the amount of weight you can bear. To determine how many pounds you can carry unencumbered, multiply your Strength score by 10.

If you carry more than this weight, you are encumbered, which means your speed drops by 10 feet, and you have disadvantage on attack rolls, as well as on Strength, Dexterity, and Constitution checks and saving throws. The maximum weight you can carry encumbered equals twice your unencumbered carrying capacity.

Push, Drag, or Lift Weight. Your Strength score tells you how much weight you can push, drag, or lift. To determine this weight, multiply your unencumbered carrying capacity by 5. While pushing or dragging weight in excess of your maximum weight, you are encumbered and can move no more than 5 feet on your turn.

Size and Strength. Larger creatures can carry more weight, whereas Tiny creatures can carry less. For each size category above Medium, double the creature's carrying capacity, maximum weight, and push, drag, or lift weight. For a Tiny creature, halve these weights. The DM has more information on creature size.

Dexterity

Dexterity measures physical agility, reflexes, balance, and poise.

Rogues and other characters who wear light armor prefer a high Dexterity score, since it helps them avoid enemy attacks. A character also

uses Dexterity when making attacks with bows, slings, and other projectile weapons.

Ability Checks

A Dexterity check typically involves one of the following tasks or an improvised task that relies on agility.

Balance. Make a Dexterity check to balance when you try to keep your feet in a tricky situation, such as when you're trying to run across a sheet of ice, balance on a tightrope, or stay upright on a rocking ship's deck.

Conceal an Object. Whenever you attempt an act of legerdemain or manual trickery, such as planting something on someone else or concealing an object on your person, make a Dexterity check. You can also draw small weapons without alerting anyone that you have done so, such as when palming a knife or sliding darts out of your sleeve.

Drive. To control a cart, wagon, chariot, or other vehicle in difficult circumstances, make a Dexterity check to drive it. You typically make a check when faced with a challenge such as a tight turn, an obstacle you must avoid, or a steep descent.

Ride. You make a Dexterity check to ride when you're trying to control your horse or other mount in difficult circumstances. Whenever precision, timing, or balance are important, you might need to make a check to stay mounted or keep your mount under control.

Sneak. Make a Dexterity check to sneak when you attempt to conceal yourself from enemies, slink past guards, slip away without being noticed, or sneak up on someone without being seen or heard.

Tumble. To perform acrobatic stunts, including dives, rolls, somersaults, and flips, make a Dexterity check to tumble.

Attack Rolls

You add your Dexterity modifier to your attack roll and your damage roll when you attack with a Dexterity-based weapon, such as a sling or a longbow.

Saving Throws

The DM commonly asks you to use Dexterity when you make a saving throw to avoid a spell such as *lightning bolt* or *fireball*, dodge a falling pillar, or dive out of the way of a charging horse.

Armor Class

Depending on the armor you wear, you add some or all of your Dexterity modifier to your Armor Class.

Initiative

At the beginning of every battle, you roll initiative, which means rolling a d20 and adding your Dexterity modifier.

Constitution

Constitution measures your health and durability, so every character benefits from having a high Constitution score.

Ability Checks

The DM commonly asks you to use Constitution when you make an ability check to hold your breath, march for hours without rest, go without sleep, survive without food or water, or accomplish a similar feat of endurance.

Saving Throws

The DM commonly asks you to use Constitution when you make a saving throw to resist disease, poison, or fatigue; withstand a medusa's petrifying gaze; endure the debilitating effects of a deep wound; or ignore excruciating pain.

Hit Points

Your Constitution modifier contributes to your hit points. See the description of your character class for more information.

Intelligence

Intelligence measures mental acuity and the ability to recall information and to reason.

Arcane magic, such as that used by wizards, often requires a keen mind for its mastery, and thus Intelligence is most important to such characters.

Ability Checks

An Intelligence check typically involves one of the following tasks or an improvised task that relies on reasoning.

Recall Lore. When you try to recall lore of any sort, make an Intelligence check. Such a check is usually concerned with one of these fields of lore:

- *cultural lore*, including lore about the customs, aphorisms, and legends of a particular culture
- *forbidden lore*, including lore about cults and their practices, lost languages, and the planes of existence and their inhabitants
- *hobbyist lore*, including in-depth knowledge of a niche interest, such as current and past standings for a knightly tournament, art of a particular style, a deep understanding of a particular philosophy, or all the plays penned by a particular playwright
- *magical lore*, including lore about spells, magic items, eldritch symbols, and magical traditions
- *military lore*, including lore about battles, coats of arms, weaponry, fortifications, and tactics
- *natural lore*, including lore about terrain, plants and animals, the weather, and natural cycles
- *planar lore*, including lore about the planes of existence, demiplanes, and planar mechanics
- *political lore*, including lore about kingdoms, rulers, courtly etiquette, and the lineages, mottoes, and emblems of noble houses
- *religious lore*, including lore about deities, rites and prayers, ecclesiastical hierarchies, and holy symbols
- *subterranean lore*, including lore about caves as well as the flora, fauna, and peoples living underground
- *trade lore*, including lore about materials, manufacture, a specific craft (such as smithing, brewing, or cooking), and commerce

Search. When you look around for clues that point to a hidden object, such as a trap or secret door, or hints of a creature's passage through an area, you make an Intelligence check to search for such things.

Saving Throws

The DM commonly asks you to use Intelligence when you make a saving throw to resist a spell that attempts to overcome your intellect.

Magic Ability

Members of certain classes, such as wizards, use Intelligence as their magic ability. If Intelligence is your magic ability, your Intelligence modifier helps determine the saving throw DCs of your spells.

Languages

A character is fluent in a number of languages noted in the description of his or her race. At 1st level, your character is fluent in a number of additional languages equal to his or her Intelligence modifier if it is greater than 0. If the character's Intelligence modifier later increases, that increase does not grant additional languages, and a decrease does not take languages away.

Choose your languages from the Standard Languages table, or choose one that is common in your campaign, such as Chondathan or Damaran in the FORGOTTEN REALMS® setting.

With your DM's permission, you can instead choose a language from the Exotic Languages table or a secret language, such as thieves' cant or the tongue of druids.

Primordial and Sylvan are each a family of languages with many dialects. For example, Brownie, Pixie, and Sprite all exist within the Sylvan family, while Auran, Aguan, Ignan, and Terran all exist within the Primordial family. Speakers of different languages or dialects within the same family can communicate with one another.

STANDARD LANGUAGES

Language	Typical Speakers	Script
Common	Humans	Common
Dwarvish	Dwarves	Dwarvish
Elvish	Elves	Elvish
Giant	Ogres, giants	Dwarvish
Gnomish	Gnomes	Dwarvish
Goblin	Goblinoids	Dwarvish
Gnoll	Gnolls	Common
Halfling	Halflings	Common
Orc	Orcs	Dwarvish

EXOTIC LANGUAGES

Language	Typical Speakers	Script
Abyssal	Demons	Infernal
Celestial	Celestials	Celestial
Draconic	Dragons	Draconic
Drow	Drow	Elvish
Deep Speech	Mind flayers, beholders	Deep Speech
Infernal	Devils	Infernal
Primordial	Elementals	Dwarvish
Sylvan	Fey creatures	Elvish
Undercommon	Underdark traders	Elvish

Wisdom

Wisdom reflects how attuned you are to your surroundings, representing general perceptiveness, intuition, insight, and other, less tangible senses.

Although Wisdom is important to all characters who want to be alert, Wisdom is especially important to clerics and druids, since the ability is crucial for channeling divine power from the gods and the environment.

Ability Checks

A Wisdom check typically involves one of the following tasks or an improvised task that relies on perceptiveness or intuition.

Administer First Aid. When you try to stabilize a dying companion or quickly diagnose what common illness is afflicting him or her, you make a Wisdom check.

Handle an Animal. When there is any question whether you can calm down a domesticated animal, keep your mount from getting spooked, or intuit an animal's intentions, make a Wisdom check.

Listen. You make a Wisdom check to listen when you're trying to hear a conversation through a closed door, eavesdrop under an open window, or hear creatures moving stealthily toward you in the forest.

Sense Motive. When you attempt to determine the true intentions of another person, such as when searching out a lie or predicting someone's next move, you can make a Wisdom check to sense the person's motive. Doing so involves gleaning clues from body language, speech habits, and changes in mannerisms.

Spot. You make a Wisdom check to spot things that are obscured or easy to miss, whether they are orcs lying in ambush ahead of you on a road, thugs hiding in the shadows of an alley, or candlelight under a closed secret door.

Saving Throws

The DM commonly asks you to use Wisdom when you make a saving throw to resist being charmed or frightened, to see through an illusion cast upon you, or to withstand an attempt to influence you.

Magic Ability

Members of certain classes, such as clerics and druids, use Wisdom as their magic ability. If Wisdom is your magic ability, your Wisdom modifier helps determine the saving throw DCs of your spells.

Charisma

Charisma measures your ability to interact with others well. It includes such factors as confidence, eloquence, and even appearance. A character with a high Charisma is likeable, forceful, or both. The character might exude confidence and grace and is most likely a natural leader. A character with a low Charisma score comes across as dull and possibly uneasy.

All characters benefit from a high Charisma, especially those who deal with nonplayer characters, such as hirelings, henchmen, and intelligent monsters. Charisma is also important to spellcasters who manipulate magical power through sheer force of will.

Ability Checks

A Charisma check typically involves one of the following tasks or an improvised task that relies on the force of your personality.

Bluff. When you make a Charisma check to bluff, you are attempting to deceive someone, either verbally or through your actions, which can encompass everything from misleading others through ambiguity to telling outright lies. Typical situations include trying to fast-talk a guard, con a merchant, earn money through gambling, pass off a disguise, dull someone's suspicions with false assurances, or maintain a straight face while telling a blatant lie.

Gather Rumors. You make a Charisma check to gather rumors when you enter a new social situation to figure out the best person to talk to for news, rumors, and gossip. You can also make a Charisma check to blend into a crowd to get the sense of key topics of conversation or to ingratiate yourself with a community and learn what people are talking about.

Intimidate. When you attempt to influence someone through overt threats, hostile actions, and physical violence, make a Charisma check to intimidate them. Examples of when you would intimidate another include trying to pry information out of a prisoner, convincing street thugs to back down from a confrontation, or using the edge of a broken bottle to convince a sneering vizier to reconsider a decision.

Perform. You make a Charisma check to perform before an audience with music, dance, acting, legerdemain, storytelling, or some other form of entertainment.

Persuade. When you attempt to influence someone or a group of people with your tact, social graces, or good nature, make a Charisma check. Typically, you attempt to persuade someone when you are acting in good faith, to foster friendships, make cordial requests, or exhibit proper etiquette. Examples of persuading others include convincing a chamberlain to let you see the king, negotiating peace between warring tribes, or inspiring a crowd of townsfolk.

Saving Throws

The DM commonly asks you to use Charisma when you make a saving throw to resist certain

magical compulsions, especially those that would overcome your sense of yourself.

Magic Ability

Members of certain classes, such as bards, use Charisma as their magic ability. If Charisma is your magic ability, your Charisma modifier helps determine the saving throw DCs of your spells.

Exploration

Whether you enter an ancient tomb, slip through the back alleys of Waterdeep, or hack a fresh trail through the thick jungles of the Isle of Dread, much of a D&D adventure revolves around exploration. Part of the fun in the game is uncovering the secrets, monsters, and treasures that the DM has placed throughout the campaign world. You never know what might lurk around the corner.

A few game mechanics are used frequently while exploring: movement, stealth, and perception. The movement rules determine how fast or far you can travel. They also cover how to swim, climb, and jump. The stealth rules outline how you can hide from creatures, while the perception rules govern how to spot hidden objects and creatures.

Embracing all of these rules are the rules for time.

Time

When you explore an area, the DM tracks your progress and describes what you see and encounter. Hours or days might pass as you delve under the earth and travel through the countryside. When time is of the essence, the DM tracks the passage of time in minutes. Also, the game uses rounds as a unit of time in combat and other situations when each character's actions are important moment by moment.

Days. It's easy to keep track of the passage of days by counting the number of long rests you and your fellow adventurers take. The DM might also keep track of days if counting down to a festival or other calendar event. Sometimes a group decides to take a break from adventures, and the DM tracks how many days of downtime

accrue. The location of a temple, tower, or tomb of interest could lie at the far end of several days of travel.

Hours. The DM broadly tracks the number of hours that pass during the course of active adventuring. Some magical rituals take an hour to complete. Research in a library takes at least a couple of hours. Reaching the next village might require 4 or 5 hours of hard riding.

Minutes. Some tasks that don't take a lot of time are best measured in minutes. It might take 10 minutes to clear the sand from a tomb entrance, or 5 minutes to work your way from one end of a crowded market to the other.

Rounds. Rounds come into play when it is important to track action on a small scale. Each round lasts about 6 seconds, meaning that 10 rounds fit into a minute.

Rounds come into play during combat, when each step or sword blow can spell the difference between victory and defeat, and in other situations when the DM keeps track of each action you take.

The "Combat" section has more information on how rounds are used in battle.

Movement

Each character has a speed, which is the distance in feet that the character can move in 1 round. To determine how far you can move in a minute, multiply your speed by 10. When precision is important, such as during a battle, you spend your speed in segments of 5 feet.

Difficult Terrain

While exploring and fighting, you can expect to move into areas of rubble, have to climb ropes and walls, and swim across rivers or subterranean lakes. When you encounter terrain you cannot move across normally, the DM adjudicates what happens. Most often, such an area is difficult terrain, which costs 5 extra feet of movement for every 5 feet of the terrain that you traverse.

Modes of Movement

There are a number of different ways you can move, from walking across an empty room to

struggling up a steep slope. These different modes of movement can be combined when you move. Simply deduct the distance of each part of your move from your speed until your speed is used up or until you are done moving.

You can enter an area only if you have enough speed left to do so. If, for example, you have only 5 feet of movement left, you cannot enter an area of difficult terrain.

Walk. Your speed defines how far in feet you can walk during a round.

Hustle. Outside combat, you can double your speed by hustling. Doing so in combat requires you to forgo making an attack, casting a spell, or taking another action (see the “Combat” section).

Jump. With a jump, you leap into the air to clear an obstacle or grab an object above you.

Long Jump: If you walk at least 10 feet and then make a long jump, you leap a number of feet up to your Strength score. If you make a standing long jump, you can leap only half that distance.

High Jump: If you walk at least 10 feet and then make a high jump, you rise a number of feet into the air up to 3 + your Strength modifier. If you make a high jump without walking first, you can jump only a number of feet up to your Strength modifier (minimum 1).

Whether you walk before making a high jump or not, you can extend your arms half your height above you during the jump. Thus, you can reach above you a distance equal to the height of the jump plus 1.5 times your height.

Climb. When you climb a vertical surface that has sufficient handholds, every 5 feet you climb costs 5 extra feet of movement. Climbing a slippery vertical surface or one with few handholds usually requires an ability check. You cannot climb across a ceiling or a similar surface without a special ability.

Swim. When you swim through water or another liquid, every 5 feet you swim costs 5 extra feet of movement. Swimming through rough water usually requires an ability check.

Drop Prone. You can drop prone by using 5 feet of your movement.

Stand Up. When you are prone, you can stand up as your move. Doing so requires all of your current speed. If your speed is 0, you can't stand up.

Crawl. Unless you stand up, crawling is your only option for movement while you remain prone. Every 5 feet you crawl costs 5 extra feet of movement.

Using Two or More Speeds

If a creature has more than one speed, such as a walking speed and a flying speed, the creature can use any of its speeds as part of the same move. When the creature switches from one speed to another, take the distance it has already covered during its current move and subtract that distance from the new speed. The result is the distance the creature can move using the new speed. If the result is 0 or less, the creature can't use the new speed during the current move.

For example, a dragon moves 30 feet on the ground and then leaps into the air to fly. The dragon has a speed of 40 feet and a fly speed of 80 feet. Because the dragon has already moved 30 feet during its move, it can fly up to 50 feet. During another turn, the dragon flies 80 feet and lands. Because its normal speed is 40 feet, the dragon cannot walk during the same move.

Falling

One of the most common hazards to an adventurer is a fall from a great height.

At the end of a fall, a creature takes 1d6 bludgeoning damage for every 10 feet it fell, to a maximum of 20d6. The creature lands prone, unless it avoids taking damage from the fall.

Stealth

When a creature tries to hide, it relies on its Dexterity to remain unnoticed. A creature can attempt a Dexterity check to sneak around, moving quietly and using cover and heavily obscured areas to avoid detection.

There are two ways you can hide. If a creature can't possibly see you, you need only to avoid making noise to avoid detection. If a creature might see you, you need to keep behind cover or stay in heavily obscured areas to remain hidden.

When you try to hide from one or more creatures, your Dexterity check is contested by the Wisdom check of any creature who might notice you or the Intelligence check of a creature

that is actively searching for signs of your presence. You make one Dexterity check for this contest. Use that check result for all such contests you engage in until you are discovered or you stop hiding.

Conditions for Stealth

In order to avoid detection, you need some way to remain out of sight, either something to hide behind or an area of poor visibility to locate yourself in.

Stay out of sight. You can't just stand in the middle of an empty, lit room and hope to avoid notice. Something must conceal you, perhaps a large object, a piece of terrain, or an immobile creature of a sufficient size, such as a slumbering dragon. Regardless of what stands between you and a viewer, it must cover at least half your body for you to hide behind it.

An environmental phenomenon that obscures you from view can also provide a means to hide. A **heavily obscured** area typically contains darkness, opaque fog, or dense foliage. A creature in a heavily obscured area is out of sight, just as if it were hiding behind an obstruction, and thus can try to hide. A **lightly obscured** area typically contains dim light, patchy fog, or moderate foliage. Some monsters and characters have special abilities that enable them to try to hide even in areas that are only lightly obscured.

Stay quiet. It's assumed that you try to avoid making noise while hiding, and your Dexterity check also represents your ability to keep quiet. If you make a noise, such as yelling a warning to an ally or knocking over a vase, you give away your position and are thus no longer hidden.

Benefit of Being Hidden

You have advantage on the attack roll when you attack a creature from which you are hidden. Making an attack reveals your position, however.

Perception

As you move through a dungeon, walk along a forest trail, or search a sage's sanctum, you rely on your abilities to spot hidden clues, notice lurking monsters, find traps or secret doors, and avoid unpleasant surprises. The DM describes

the scene to you, but sometimes you want your character to search for something that the DM might be omitting from the description. The perception rules help determine whether your character notices or can find a hidden object or creature.

Noticing and Finding

Your Wisdom score serves as a measure of your general awareness of your surroundings, whether you notice creatures lurking in ambush, hear the stealthy tread of an approaching assassin, or catch the telltale whiff of troglodyte in the air.

Your Intelligence score measures your ability to find something you're looking for, whether it's the faint outline of a secret door in a wall, the hollow sound that reveals a hidden compartment in the bottom of a chest, clues to a murder, or the footsteps of an invisible creature in the dust.

Sherlock Holmes, renowned for his Intelligence, is the undisputed master of finding clues and determining their significance. Tarzan, on the other hand, who unfailingly hears the rustle of leaves or the snap of a twig, or sees a stalking tiger or lurking snake, relies on his Wisdom.

The line between using Wisdom or Intelligence can seem indistinct at times. Making an effort to notice something might seem similar to finding something you're looking for, but it still relies on Wisdom, because it's more about general awareness than it is about attention to detail. Likewise, if you spend a moment to scan the surrounding trees, or press your ear to a door to hear what might lurk beyond, you're relying on Wisdom rather than Intelligence. As a rule, if you're not positive that Intelligence is the right choice, then Wisdom is the ability to use.

Finding a Hidden Object

When your character searches for a hidden object, such as a secret door or a trap, the DM typically asks you to make an Intelligence check. Such a check can be used to find hidden details or other information and clues that you might otherwise overlook. The DM sets the DC, as usual.

In most cases, you need to tell the DM where you are looking in order for him or her to determine your chance of success. For example, a key is hidden beneath a set of folded clothes in the top drawer of a bureau. If you tell the DM that you pace around the room, looking at the walls and furniture for clues, you have no chance of finding the key, regardless of your Intelligence check result. You would have to specify that you were opening the drawers or searching the bureau in order to have any chance of success.

Since traps and other dangers might protect hidden objects, this attention to detail is important for the game to remain fair. Just as the DM should never dictate your character's actions, so too should you make your intentions clear to the DM when you search for concealed clues and hidden treasures.

Noticing or Finding a Hidden Creature

When a creature is hiding from your character, you contest that creature's Dexterity check with either a Wisdom check or an Intelligence check. The DM usually asks you for a Wisdom check if you have no idea that a creature is present and thus no reason to be actively searching, or if you're taking a moment to scan your surroundings or listen for movement. In this case, your search is a mix of looking and listening, so you don't normally need to be too specific in your description of where you're searching. A lurking foe might give itself away with a muffled cough, a trail of disturbed dust, or some other sign.

The DM generally asks for an Intelligence check if you're specifically searching for clues to a hidden creature's location. Here the guidelines for finding a hidden object apply; you need to tell the DM if you're looking at the curtains for a telltale bulge, checking the floor for footprints, or taking some other action to find the creature.

Listening at a Door

As your character explores a dungeon or a similar environment, one way to be prepared for dangers ahead is to press your ear to a door in an effort to hear signs of activity beyond. If humanoid creatures are occupying the area, you

might hear the casual conversation of bored sentries or a fierce argument between two rival chieftains. If a dragon is sleeping on its treasure pile, you might hear the rhythmic whisper of its breathing, perhaps punctuated by fiery snorts or the crackle of electricity around its nostrils. When you listen at a door or otherwise try to hear noise in an area, the DM asks you to make a Wisdom check, setting the DC based on the volume of whatever you might hear.

Combat

This section details the rules for combat. It covers the basics of how to start a battle, the actions you can take, and how those actions work.

The Combat Sequence

This is the basic sequence of play for a combat encounter:

1. Determine surprise.
2. Roll initiative.
3. Play through a round of combat, with each participant in the battle taking a turn in initiative order.

If the battle continues, repeat step 3.

The Round

Each round represents 6 seconds. During a round, each participant in a battle takes a turn in an order determined by initiative. Once everyone has taken a turn, the fight continues to the next round if neither side has defeated the other.

When an effect, such as one caused by a spell, lasts for a round, it lasts from the current turn to the same turn in the next round. Unless specified otherwise, the effect ends at the start of that next turn.

Surprise

A band of adventurers sneaks up on a bandit camp, springing from the trees to attack them. A gelatinous cube glides down a dungeon passage,

unnoticed by an orc patrol until the cube absorbs one of the group.

In these situations, one side of the battle gained surprise over the other. One side acts while the other is caught off guard and unable to act for a critical moment.

Determining Surprise. The DM determines who might be surprised. Creatures that were unaware of their opponents' approach or presence are surprised. A creature can be surprised even if its allies aren't.

Effect of Surprise. A creature that is surprised cannot move or take actions until after its first turn in the battle.

Initiative

Initiative determines the order of actions during a battle.

Determining Initiative. To determine initiative, each participant in a battle rolls a d20 and adds its Dexterity modifier. At the DM's discretion, a group of identical creatures can use one roll for the entire group, with each member of that group acting at the same time.

The DM ranks the combatants in order from the one with the highest initiative result to the one with the lowest. This is the order in which they act during each round.

Resolving Ties. If a tie occurs, the DM decides the order among tied DM-controlled creatures, and the players decide the order among their tied characters. The DM can decide the order if the tie is between a monster and a player character. Optionally, the DM can have the tied creatures each roll a d20 to determine the order, highest roll going first.

Your Turn

On your turn, you can take one action. You can also move up to your speed. After you have moved and taken your action, your turn ends. See "Movement in Combat" and "Actions in Combat" below for more information about moving and acting during a battle.

Skipping Your Turn or Part of It. You don't have to move or take an action on your turn, and sometimes you might want to do nothing other than watch the battle unfold.

If you choose not to do anything on your turn, concentrating on defense can help you remain safe until your next turn. Consider using your action to dodge (see "Actions in Combat" below).

Reactions. Certain special abilities and spells allow you take a special action called a reaction. A reaction is an instant response to a trigger of some kind. The opportunity attack is the most common type of reaction (see "Movement in Combat").

You can take only one reaction per round. When you take a reaction, you can't take another one until the start of your next turn. If the reaction interrupts another creature's turn, that creature can continue its turn right after the reaction.

Any effect that denies you the ability to take actions also prohibits you from taking a reaction.

Movement in Combat

When you move during a battle, you can mix and match movement modes as normal, walking, jumping, swimming, crawling, and so on (see the "Exploration" section). You also follow these rules.

Breaking Up a Move. You can break up your movement on your turn, moving both before and after your action. For example, if you have a speed of 30 feet, you can move 10 feet, search for a trapdoor, and then move 20 feet.

Moving Around Other Creatures. You can't move through an enemy's space unless it is two sizes larger or smaller than you. In contrast, you can move through an ally's space, but you can't stop there.

Opportunity Attacks. If a hostile creature that you can see moves out of your reach, you can use your reaction to make a melee attack against that creature. This attack is called an opportunity attack. The attack interrupts the creature's movement, occurring right before the creature leaves your reach.

You can avoid provoking an opportunity attack by taking the disengage action (see "Actions in Combat" below). You also don't provoke an opportunity attack when someone or something moves you without using your movement, action, or reaction. For example, you don't provoke an opportunity attack if an explosion hurls you out

of a foe's reach or if gravity causes you to fall past an enemy.

Actions in Combat

This section describes the typical actions you can take during your turn. Some special abilities allow you to use several of these actions at once.

Attack

Whether you are swinging a sword, launching an arrow from a bow, or brawling with your fists, you are making an attack, the most common action to take in a battle. See "Attack Basics" below for the rules that govern attacks.

Cast a Spell

Many adventurers, such as wizards and clerics, have access to spells and can use them to great effect in combat. A spell requires a single action to cast, unless noted otherwise. See the "Magic" section for rules on spellcasting.

Coup de Grace

When a foe has fallen unconscious, you have a chance to slay the helpless creature outright. You can use your action to perform a coup de grace against an unconscious creature within 5 feet of you. Doing so requires you to attack that creature. If you hit the creature and deal damage, the creature drops to 0 hit points, regardless of how many hit points it had. If the creature was already at 0 hit points, it dies.

Disengage

When you disengage, you move up to half your speed. If you leave a hostile creature's reach during this movement, you do not provoke an opportunity attack from that creature.

Dodge

When you take the dodge action, you focus entirely on avoiding attacks. Until your next turn, attack rolls against you have disadvantage, and you make Dexterity saving throws with advantage. You lose this benefit if you cannot move or take actions, such as if you become paralyzed by a monster's attack or stuck in quicksand.

Grapple

Using at least one free hand, you try to grab and hold a creature no more than one size larger than you by making a successful Strength check contested by the creature's Strength check or Dexterity check (the creature chooses the ability). If you succeed, the creature's speed becomes 0 and cannot increase until the grapple ends.

Moving a Grappled Creature. When you move, you can drag or carry a grappled creature with you, but every 5 feet costs you 5 extra feet of movement, unless the creature is two or more sizes smaller than you.

Restraining a Creature. As a separate action, you can restrain a grappled creature by making another successful Strength check contested by the creature's Strength check or Dexterity check. If you succeed, the creature is restrained. While you're restraining it, attacks against you have advantage, your attacks have disadvantage, and you have disadvantage on Dexterity saving throws. You can stop restraining the creature at any time.

Ending a Grapple. You can release a grappled creature whenever you like, and you must do so if you can't take actions or if you lose control of the grabbing limb. If a force, such as the blast created by the spell *thunderwave*, removes a grappled creature from your reach, the creature is freed, unless the force also targets you and moves you with the creature.

As an action, a grappled creature can escape by succeeding on a Strength or Dexterity check contested by your Strength check.

Initiating a Contest

Battle often involves pitting your physical or mental prowess against that of your foe. Such a challenge is represented by a contest. This section includes the most common contests that require an action in combat: grapple and knock down. The DM can use these contests as models for improvising others.

Help

You can lend your aid to another creature in the completion of a task. The creature you aid gains advantage for the next relevant ability check he or she makes to perform that task before your next turn.

Alternatively, you can aid another creature in one of its attacks against a creature within 5 feet of you. If the creature you help attacks the target before your next turn, the attack roll is made with advantage.

Hide

In battle, it is often advantageous to drop out of sight, but doing so can be difficult. Trying to hide takes up your action. See “Stealth” in the “Exploration” section for rules on hiding.

Hinder

You distract or otherwise hinder another creature within 5 feet of you. When you hinder a creature, describe the manner in which you do so. The creature has disadvantage on the next relevant ability check or attack roll it makes before your next turn.

Hustle

With the hustle action, you move up to your speed. If you combine the action with your regular move, your speed is effectively doubled for your current turn.

Knock Down

You knock a creature prone that is no more than one size larger than you by making a successful Strength check contested by that creature’s Strength check or Dexterity check (the creature chooses the ability).

Ready an Action

Sometimes you want to get the jump on a foe or wait for a particular circumstance before you act. To do so, you forgo your action on your turn to take an action later in the round using your reaction, an action that requires no more than a split second of forethought.

When you ready an action, you decide what perceivable event or circumstance will trigger your reaction, and you choose what action you’ll take: attack, grapple, hustle, knock down, or use an item. Examples include “As soon as the troll walks out from behind the corner, I shoot an arrow at it,” or “If the goblin moves next to me, I hustle away.”

When the trigger occurs, you can choose to take your reaction, and you do so right after the trigger finishes. If the reaction interrupts another creature’s turn, that creature can continue its turn right after the reaction.

If the trigger never occurs or you ignore it, you simply wait for your next turn.

Search

Whether you’re searching for a creature or an object, trying to find something requires concentration—just enough to use your action in the midst of a fight. See “Perception” in the “Exploration” section for rules on perceiving things.

Use an Item

Both mundane objects and magic items, from a handful of caltrops to a *horn of blasting*, are useful tools in combat. Activating the special ability of such an item requires an action.

In contrast, you can combine drawing or stowing one weapon or shield with your action, your move, or both.

Many of the other most common interactions with items—moving through a door that opens easily, picking up a scroll, and withdrawing a potion from your backpack—do not require an action at all. You are assumed to be able to incorporate such uses into your turn, while you move and take your action. Sometimes, however, the DM will require you to use your action when an item needs special care or when it presents an unusual obstacle. For instance, your DM could reasonably expect you to use an action to open a stuck door.

You also use this action to interact with objects in the environment. Your DM might require you to use this action to swing on a chandelier, knock over a stone statue, pull a lever to open a portcullis, or turn a crank to lower a drawbridge.

Improvising an Action

Your ability scores allow you to do things not covered by the actions described in this section, such as breaking down doors, intimidating your enemies, sensing weaknesses in magical defenses, or calling for a parley with a foe. The only limits to the actions you can take are your imagination and your ability scores.

When you describe an action not detailed elsewhere in the rules, the DM tells you whether that action is possible and what kind of roll you need to make, if any, to determine success or failure.

Attack Basics

Attacks generally have the following structure.

1. **Choose a target.** Before you attack, pick a target within your attack's range: a creature, an object, or a location.
2. **Determine modifiers.** The DM determines if the target has cover. Also, check to see if you have advantage or disadvantage against the target. In addition, spells, special abilities, and other effects can apply penalties or bonuses to your attack roll.
3. **Resolve the attack.** After the DM has determined the situational modifiers that might apply, you make your attack roll as described below. If you hit, you roll damage, unless your attack specifies otherwise.

Attack Rolls

When you attack with a weapon or a spell, you must determine whether the attack hits or misses. You do so with an attack roll, a d20 roll adjusted by modifiers that represent your natural skill with a weapon or spells, as well as any special skill or training you possess.

The DM might decide that you have a better or worse chance to hit because of factors beyond your control. For example, it is harder to hit an orc that is crouched behind a stone wall than one standing in the open.

An attack roll looks like this: d20 + ability modifier + weapon or magic training (if any) + situational modifiers. If the total of your roll plus modifiers equals or exceeds the target's Armor Class (AC), the attack hits.

Ability Modifier. The ability modifier used for a typical melee attack is Strength, and the ability modifier used for a typical ranged attack is Dexterity. A magic attack uses the attacker's relevant magic ability score, which is usually determined by class. For instance, wizards use Intelligence, and clerics use Wisdom.

Natural 1. If your d20 roll is a 1 before adding modifiers, your attack automatically misses.

Natural 20. If your d20 roll is a 20 before adding modifiers, your attack automatically hits. In addition, the attack is a critical hit (see the "Critical Hits" section).

Attacking without Proficiency. If you make an attack roll using a weapon with which you lack proficiency, you make the attack roll with disadvantage.

Cover

Cover is provided by solid objects that stand between you and your target. Walls, pillars, and trees are common examples of things that can provide cover. A target behind cover that blocks at least half its body is harder to hit.

Half Cover. A target has half cover if an obstacle blocks at least half of its body. The obstacle might be a low wall, a large piece of furniture, a narrow tree trunk, or a creature, whether an enemy or a friend.

A target with half cover has a +2 bonus to AC and Dexterity saving throws, but only against attacks and effects that originate from the opposite side of the cover.

Three-Quarters Cover. A target has three-quarters cover if about three-quarters of it is covered by an obstacle. The obstacle might be a portcullis, an arrow slit, or a thick tree trunk.

A target with three-quarters cover has a +5 bonus to AC and Dexterity saving throws, but only against attacks and effects that originate from the opposite side of the cover.

Total Cover. A target has total cover if it is completely concealed by an obstacle. Under normal circumstances, a target with total cover cannot be targeted directly by an attack or a spell, although many spells can reach such a target by including it in an area of effect.

Attacking an Unseen Target

Combatants often try to escape their foes' notice by hiding, casting the *invisibility* spell, or lurking in darkness.

When you attack a target that you can't see, you have disadvantage on the attack roll, whether or not you know where the target is located. Your attack might miss because you rolled too low or because the target is nowhere near where you struck!

Melee Attacks

A melee attack allows you to attack a foe within your reach. Melee attacks typically use a sword, a warhammer, an axe, or some other weapon, including bare fists. Some spells also involve making a melee attack.

Reach. Most creatures have a 5-foot reach, and can thus attack targets within 5 feet of them. Certain creatures have greater reach, as noted in their descriptions.

Two-Weapon Fighting. When you wield two light melee weapons at the same time, you can use your action to make an attack with each weapon. You don't add your ability modifier to the damage of the second attack.

Ranged Attacks

When you make a ranged attack, you fire a bow or a crossbow, hurl a throwing axe, or otherwise use a projectile weapon to strike a foe at a distance. Many spells also involve making a ranged attack.

You can make ranged attacks only against targets within a specified range. A spell's description indicates its maximum range. You can't attack a target beyond this range.

A weapon has two ranges. The smaller number indicates the weapon's normal range. The larger number indicates long range. You have disadvantage when you attack targets beyond normal range and out to long range.

Damage Rolls

Each weapon and spell notes the damage it deals, such as 1d8 or 2d6. Roll the damage die or dice, add any modifiers, and apply the damage to your target. Magic weapons, special abilities, and other factors can grant a bonus to your damage. In addition, certain special abilities give you extra damage represented by bonus dice.

The effects of taking damage and of dropping to 0 hit points are described in the "Damage and Dying" section.

Weapon Attacks. If you're attacking with a melee weapon, apply your Strength modifier to the damage, and if you're attacking with a ranged weapon, apply your Dexterity modifier.

Certain weapons and special abilities allow you to apply a different modifier. For example, a

finesse weapon is a melee weapon that lets you attack with your Dexterity modifier instead of your Strength modifier.

Damage against Multiple Targets. If a spell or another effect deals damage to more than one target at the same time, roll the damage once for all the targets.

Critical Hits

If your attack is a critical hit, the target takes extra damage. Take one of the attack's damage dice, roll it a second time, and add it to the damage against the target. For example, if your attack normally deals 2d6 + 2 piercing damage, the critical hit deals 3d6 + 2 piercing damage.

If the attack has different damage dice, you choose which die to roll. For example, if the attack deals 1d6 piercing damage and 1d8 bludgeoning damage, you can roll an extra d6 or d8.

Damage Types

All damage has a type. The type of damage an attack deals helps describe how a creature or an object is being harmed when it loses hit points. Certain creatures and objects are resistant or vulnerable to certain types of damage.

Acid. An effect that corrodes, dissolves, or otherwise erodes an object or a creature's body deals acid damage. A black dragon's corrosive breath deals acid damage, as do the enzymes excreted by a black pudding and an ochre jelly.

Bludgeoning. When a creature or an object is subjected to blunt force, bludgeoning damage can be the result. Maces, flails, and hammers deal bludgeoning damage. When a creature falls, it takes bludgeoning damage from the surface it strikes. Attacks that constrict or crush can also deal bludgeoning damage.

Cold. Some attacks expose their targets to such severe cold that the creature's flesh freezes or blisters. Effects that deal cold damage include a white dragon's freezing breath, the elemental cold created by a *cone of cold* spell, or the infernal cold that radiates from an ice devil's spear.

Fire. Fire damage injures creatures by burning them. It might result from contact with actual flames, exposure to extreme heat, or being

caught in an explosive burst. Fire damage is caused by such effects as a red dragon's breath, the fire surrounding a balor, the flames that make up a fire elemental's body, and the heat radiating from a salamander.

Force. Force is pure magical energy focused into a damaging form. It takes many shapes, including spectral objects that batter a target, invisible kinetic energy that tears a creature apart, and magical rays that disintegrate. Most effects that deal force damage are spells, including *magic missile* and *spiritual weapon*.

Lightning. Some attacks rely on electricity and injure a creature by burning it and shocking its system. A *lightning bolt* spell, a blue dragon's breath, and a lightning strike from a natural storm all deal lightning damage.

Necrotic. The physical and spiritual consequence of contact with negative energy is necrotic damage, which both kills the flesh and withers the soul. Negative energy comes from the Negative Energy Plane, a vast realm of anti-life that provides the animating essence for many undead creatures. A wight's energy drain attack, the breath of a shadow dragon, and a *chill touch* spell all deal necrotic damage.

Piercing. An attack that punctures or impales deals piercing damage. Common causes of piercing damage include spears, a monster's bite, and spikes lining the bottom of a pit trap.

Poison. An effect that causes internal damage to a creature's nerves, blood, or digestive system usually involves the use of poison. Many creatures, such as giant spiders and giant centipedes, deal poison damage, as do some diseases and the billowing clouds of a green dragon's breath.

Psychic. An attack against a creature's mind often involves psychic damage. Psionic abilities, such as a mind flayer's psionic blast power, typically deal psychic damage, but psychic damage does not always have a psionic source. It can also result from the casting of a *feeblemind* spell or when an evil character handles a profoundly good magic item, such as a *holy avenger*.

Radiant. Some effects create an intense, bright light infused with positive energy, which sears the flesh like fire and overloads the spirit with power, dealing radiant damage. Positive energy

comes from the Positive Energy Plane, a realm of brilliant white radiance that is the furnace of creation and, as such, the antithesis of the Negative Energy Plane. Spells such as *flame strike*, and certain attacks of celestial creatures, deal radiant damage.

Slashing. Attacks that cause lacerations or abrasions often deal slashing damage. Most swords and axes deal this type of damage, as do a monster's claws.

Thunder. Thunder damage results from sudden, concussive bursts of sound, usually manifesting as a shock wave or a deafening noise. The *thunderwave* spell is an example of effect that deals thunder damage.

Damage and Dying

Injury and the risk of death are constant companions of those who would explore the worlds of D&D. A strike from a sword, a puncture from an arrow, or a blast of flame from a well-placed fireball all have the potential to damage, or even kill, the hardiest of creatures.

Hit Points

Hit points represent a combination of physical and mental durability, the will to live, and luck. Hit points are an abstraction that represent a creature's ability to survive the many perils lying in wait.

Hit Point Maximum. A creature's hit point maximum is, simply, the most hit points that creature can have.

Hit Dice. Every creature has 1 or more Hit Dice, short for Hit Point Dice. Player characters have 1 Hit Die per level.

A creature's hit point maximum is determined by rolling each Hit Die (or taking its average) and adding to it the creature's Constitution modifier. A creature has a minimum of 1 hit point per Hit Die.

After a creature rests, it can also spend Hit Dice to regain hit points (see "Resting" below).

Current Hit Points. A creature's current hit points, or just hit points, can be any number between the creature's hit point maximum and 0. This number often changes. As a creature receives healing or takes damage, its hit points rise or fall.

Damage

Whenever a creature takes damage, that damage is subtracted from its hit points. Creatures with more hit points are more durable and, therefore, more difficult to kill. Those with fewer hit points are more fragile. The loss of hit points has no effect on a creature's capabilities until the creature drops to 0 hit points.

Resistance. If a target has resistance to a type of damage, that damage is halved against the target.

Vulnerability. If a target has vulnerability to a type of damage, that damage is doubled against the target.

Describing the Effects of Damage

Dungeon Masters describe hit point loss in different ways. When your current hit point total is half or more of your hit point maximum, you typically show no signs of injury. When you drop below half your hit point maximum, you show signs of wear, such as cuts and bruises. An attack that reduces you to 0 hit points strikes you directly, leaving a bleeding injury or other trauma, or it simply knocks you unconscious.

Healing

A creature heals whenever it regains hit points. Creatures can heal by magical means, such as from a cure wounds spell or a potion of healing, or by resting.

Regardless of the method, add any hit points regained to your current hit points. Remember, your hit points cannot exceed your hit point maximum, so any hit points regained in excess of this number are lost.

Dropping to 0 Hit Points

When you drop to 0 hit points, you either die outright or fall unconscious.

Instant Death. Massive damage can kill you instantly. When damage reduces you to 0 hit points and there is damage remaining, you die if the remaining damage equals or exceeds your hit point maximum.

Say you have 6 hit points and take 18 damage from an attack. After reducing you to 0 hit points, 12 damage remains. If your hit point maximum is 12 or less, you die.

Falling Unconscious. If damage reduces you to 0 hit points and fails to kill you, you fall

unconscious (see "Conditions"). This unconsciousness ends if you regain any hit points.

Death Saving Throws. Whenever you start your turn with 0 hit points, you must make a special Constitution saving throw, called a death saving throw, to determine whether you creep closer to death or hang onto life.

Make a DC 10 Constitution saving throw. A success or failure has no effect by itself, but three of either does affect you.

On your third success, you become stable (see below). On your third failure, you die. The successes and failures do not need to be consecutive, and the number of both is reset to zero when you regain any hit points or become stable.

Natural 1. If your d20 roll is a 1 before adding modifiers, your saving throw counts as two failures.

Natural 20. If your d20 roll is a 20 before adding modifiers, you regain 1 hit point.

Damage at 0 Hit Points. Each time a creature with 0 hit points takes damage, it suffers a death saving throw failure. If the damage equals the creature's hit point maximum, it dies.

Monsters and Death

Most DMs have a monster die the instant it drops to 0 hit points, rather than having it fall unconscious and begin the process of dying.

Mighty villains and special nonplayer characters are common exceptions; the DM might have them fall unconscious and follow the same rules as player characters.

Stabilizing a Creature

The best way to save a creature with 0 hit points is to heal it. If healing is unavailable, you can, at least, stabilize the creature so that it isn't killed by failed death saving throws.

How to Stabilize. To stabilize a creature, you must use your action to tend to the creature, and you must succeed on a DC 10 Wisdom check to administer first aid to it.

The Effects of Being Stable. A stable creature doesn't make death saving throws, even though it has 0 hit points, but it does remain unconscious. The creature stops being stable, and begins dying again, if it takes any damage.

A stable creature that is not healed regains 1 hit point after 1d4 hours.

Knocking a Creature Out

Sometimes an attacker wants to incapacitate a foe, rather than deal a killing blow. When an attacker reduces a creature to 0 hit points with a melee attack, the attacker can knock the creature out. The attacker can make this choice the instant the damage is dealt. The creature falls unconscious and is stable.

Resting

The most expedient method of healing is through the use of magic, but when magic is not available, you can regain hit points by resting. You can take two different kinds of rests: a short rest and a long rest.

Short Rest

A short rest is a period of downtime, at least 1 hour long, during which you catch your breath, eat, drink, and clean and bind wounds.

You can spend one or more of your Hit Dice during a short rest, up to your maximum number of Hit Dice. For each Hit Die you spend in this way, roll the die and add your Constitution modifier to it. You regain hit points equal to the total. You can decide to spend an additional Hit Die after each roll. Once you have spent all your Hit Dice, you must complete a long rest to regain them.

Long Rest

A long rest is a period of extended downtime, at least 8 hours long, during which you sleep or perform light activity: reading, talking, eating, or standing watch for no more than 2 hours of the rest period. If the rest is interrupted by a strenuous activity—such as attacking, taking damage, or casting a spell—you must start the rest over to gain any benefit from it, unless the interruption takes less than an hour.

You must have at least 1 hit point to take a long rest. At the end of the rest, you regain all your hit points and half of your Hit Dice (round up).

You cannot benefit from more than one long rest in a 24-hour period.

Conditions

Conditions alter a creature's capabilities in a variety of ways and arise as a result of a spell or other effect. Most conditions, such as blinded and deafened, are impairments, but a few, such as incorporeal and invisible, can be advantageous.

A condition lasts either until it is countered (the prone condition is countered by standing up, for example) or for a duration specified by the effect that imposed the condition.

If more than one effect impose the same condition on a creature, each instance of the condition has its own duration, but the effects of the condition are not compounded on the creature.

The following definitions specify what happens to a creature while it is subjected to a condition. Each definition is a starting point. It's up to the DM to determine additional details that might be appropriate for the condition in certain circumstances. For example, an intoxicated character normally makes ability checks with disadvantage, but the DM might decide that Charisma checks made to influence ale-loving dwarves don't suffer this drawback.

Blinded

- A blinded creature automatically fails any ability check that involves sight.
- Attack rolls against the creature have advantage, and the creature's attack rolls have disadvantage.

Charmed

- A charmed creature cannot attack the charmer or target the charmer with harmful abilities or magical effects.
- The charmer has advantage on any ability check to interact socially with the creature.

Deafened

- A deafened creature automatically fails any ability check that involves hearing.

Frightened

- A frightened creature has disadvantage on ability checks and attack rolls while the source of its fear is within line of sight.
- The creature cannot willingly move to a position where it would end a turn closer to the source of its fear than where it started.

Incorporeal

- An incorporeal creature has resistance against nonmagical damage, and the creature's targets have resistance against its nonmagical damage.
- The creature can move through an object or another creature, but can't stop there.

Intoxicated

- An intoxicated creature has disadvantage on attack rolls and ability checks.
- To cast a spell, the creature must first succeed on a DC 10 Constitution check. Otherwise, the spellcasting action is wasted, but the spell is not.

Invisible

- An invisible creature is impossible to see without the aid of magic or a special sense. For the purpose of hiding, the creature is heavily obscured. The creature's location can be detected by any noise it makes or any tracks it leaves.
- Attack rolls against the creature have disadvantage, and the creature's attack rolls have advantage.

Paralyzed

- A paralyzed creature cannot move, speak, or take any action that is not purely mental. It drops whatever it's holding and falls prone.
- The creature automatically fails Strength and Dexterity saving throws.
- Attack rolls against the creature have advantage.

Prone

- A prone creature's only movement option is to crawl, unless it stands up.
- The creature has disadvantage on attack rolls.

- An attack roll against the creature has disadvantage, unless the attacker is within 5 feet of the creature.

Restrained

- A restrained creature's speed becomes 0, and it cannot benefit from bonuses to its speed.
- Attack rolls against the creature have advantage, and the creature's attack rolls have disadvantage.
- The creature has disadvantage on Dexterity saving throws.

Stunned

- A stunned creature cannot move or take actions.
- The creature automatically fails Strength and Dexterity saving throws.
- Attack rolls against the creature have advantage.

Unconscious

- An unconscious creature drops whatever it's holding and falls prone.
- The creature cannot move, take actions, or perceive its surroundings.
- The creature automatically fails Strength and Dexterity saving throws.
- Attack rolls against the creature have advantage.

Magic

Spells are wielded by many of the heroes and villains of DUNGEONS & DRAGONS. Characters of different classes have different ways of learning and preparing their spells, but when it comes to casting them, the spells are very much alike.

This section provides an overview of the spell description format combined with a discussion of how spells work and what happens when magical effects combine.

Reading a Spell Description

A spell's description is organized into several sections.

Name, Level, and Descriptors. The description starts with the spell's name. The next line gives the spell's level, its school of magic, and any additional descriptors, such as the ritual tag.

These two lines are followed by a paragraph or two describing the spell.

Requirement. Some spells require special circumstances or specific items to be cast. If you cannot meet a spell's requirements, you cannot cast the spell. A spell's requirements are in addition to any requirements you normally have to meet for casting a spell.

Effect. This section describes the game mechanics for a spell.

Material Components. If a spell has material components, they are specified in this entry. Unless a spell says otherwise, material components are consumed when a spell is cast.

Casting a Spell

When a character casts any spell, the same basic rules are followed, regardless of the character's class or the spell's effects.

First, to cast a spell you must have access to it, either from your class, a magic item, or some other source. Certain classes also require that you have the spell prepared in advance.

Second, in combat, you must cast a spell as an action (see "Actions in Combat" in the combat rules), unless a spell's description says otherwise. Outside combat, you can effectively

cast a spell whenever you want, but you must complete one spell before casting the next.

Spell Components

A spell's components are the physical requirements you must meet in order to cast it. Unless a spell's description says otherwise, a spell requires you to chant mystic words, which constitutes its verbal component, and to have use of at least one arm to gesture, which constitutes the spell's somatic component. Some spells also have material components, particular items or objects that are required for the casting.

If you can't provide a spell's components, you are unable to cast the spell. Thus, if you are silenced or your arms are bound, you cannot cast a spell.

Casting in Armor

Because of the mental focus and precise gestures required for spellcasting, you must be proficient with the armor you are wearing to cast a spell. You are otherwise too distracted and physically hampered by your armor for spellcasting.

Casting a Spell at a Higher Level

When you cast a spell using a spell slot that is of a higher level than the spell, the spell assumes the higher level for that casting. For instance, if you cast the 3rd-level spell *fireball* using a 5th-level slot, that *fireball* is 5th level.

Some spells have more powerful effects when cast at a higher level, as detailed in an entry called At Higher Levels.

Casting Time

Casting a spell requires an amount of time specified in the spell. Most spells require a single action to cast, a few seconds of time during which you recite a magical word or phrase and complete a set of hand motions.

Swift Spells. A swift spell requires but an utterance. A spell that has a swift casting time can be cast as your action or as part of another action. If you cast the spell as part of another action, that other action cannot involve casting a spell or activating a magic item.

Reactions. Some spells can be cast as reactions. These spells take a fraction of a second

to bring about and are cast in response to some event. If a spell can be cast as a reaction, the spell description tells you exactly when you can do so.

Longer Casting Times. Certain spells require more time to cast: minutes or even hours. If you take damage while you are casting a spell that requires more than a single action or reaction, you must succeed on a Constitution saving throw to continue casting the spell. The DC equals half the damage you just took. If you take damage from multiple sources, such as from an arrow and a dragon's breath, you make a saving throw against each source of damage separately. If you fail the save, the spell fails, but it is not expended. If you want to cast the spell again, you must start over.

Range

The target or point of origin of a spell must be within the spell's range. Once the spell is cast, its effects are not limited by its range.

Most spells have ranges expressed in feet. Some spells can target only a creature (including yourself) that you touch. Other spells affect only the caster. For example, the *shield* spell protects you and only you.

Targets

A typical spell requires you to pick one or more targets to be affected by the spell's magic. A spell's description tells you whether the spell targets creatures, objects, a point of origin for an area of effect, or a combination of these things.

To target someone or something, you must have a clear path to it, so it cannot be behind total cover. If you place an area of effect at a point that you can't see and an obstruction is between you and that point, the point of origin comes into being on the near side of that obstruction.

If you are in the area of effect or within the range of a spell you cast, you can target yourself.

Areas of Effect

A *fireball* explodes, burning an entire group of orcs. A *cone of cold* blasts forth, freezing a gang of ogres in place. Spells such as these cover an area, allowing them to affect multiple creatures at once.

An area of effect has one of several different shapes. It also has a point of origin, a location from which the spell's energy erupts. The rules for each shape specify how you position its point of origin. Typically, a point of origin is a point in space, but some spells require it to be a creature or an object.

Cloud. You select a cloud's point of origin, and the cloud spreads from that point. A cloud's size is expressed as a radius in feet that extends outward from the point.

The gas or other substance of a cloud expands outward from the point of origin to the distance of its radius, moving around objects such as walls and pillars.

A cloud's point of origin is included in the cloud's area of effect.

Cone. A cone extends in a direction you choose from its point of origin. A cone's width at a given point along its length is equal to that point's distance from the point of origin. A cone's area of effect specifies its maximum length.

The energy in a cone expands in straight lines from the point of origin. Thus, if no unblocked straight line extends from the point of origin to a location within the cone, that location is not included in the cone's area of effect.

A cone's point of origin is not included in the cone's area of effect, unless you decide otherwise.

Cube. You select a cube's point of origin, which lies anywhere on a face of the cubic effect. The cube's size is expressed as the length of each side.

The energy or substance in a cube expands outward from the point of origin to the maximum extent of the cube, moving around objects such as walls and pillars.

A cube's point of origin is not included in the cube's area of effect, unless you decide otherwise.

Cylinder. A cylinder's point of origin is the center of a circle of a particular radius, as given in the spell description. The circle must be on the ground. The energy in a cylinder expands in straight lines from the point of origin to the perimeter of the circle, forming the base of the cylinder. The spell's effect then shoots up from the base, out to a distance equal to the height of the cylinder.

Because the energy in a cylinder emanates in straight lines, a cylinder is similar to a cone in terms of which parts of its area the energy can

affect. If no unblocked straight line extends from the cylinder's base to a location within the cylinder, that location is not included in the area of effect.

A cylinder's point of origin is included in the cylinder's area of effect.

Line. A line extends from its point of origin in a straight path up to its length and covers an area defined by its width.

A line's point of origin is not included in the line's area of effect, unless you decide otherwise.

Sphere. You select a sphere's point of origin, and the sphere extends outward from that point. The sphere's size is expressed as a radius in feet that extends from the point.

The energy in a sphere (like that in a cone or a cylinder) expands in straight lines from the point of origin. If no unblocked straight line extends from that point to a spot within the sphere, that spot is not included in the sphere's area of effect.

A sphere's point of origin is included in the sphere's area of effect.

Saving Throws

Many spells specify that a target can make a saving throw to avoid some or all of a spell's effects. The spell specifies the ability that the target uses for the save and what happens on a success or failure.

The DC to resist one of your spells equals 10 + your magic ability modifier. If you have a spellcasting bonus from your class or another source, add the bonus to the DC.

Duration

A spell's duration is the length of time the spell persists. A duration can be expressed in rounds, minutes, hours, or even years. Some spells specify that their effects last until the spells are dispelled or destroyed.

Some spells are instantaneous. The spell harms, heals, creates, or alters something or someone in a way that cannot be dispelled, because its magic exists only for an instant.

Concentration

Some spells require you to maintain your concentration in order to keep their magic active

after they're cast. If you lose concentration, such a spell ends.

A spell that requires concentration tells you so in its Duration entry, and the spell specifies how long you can concentrate on it. You can end your concentration at any time (no action required).

Normal activity, such as moving and attacking, does not interfere with your concentration. The actions and events that can interfere with it are discussed below.

Casting another spell that requires concentration. You lose your concentration on a spell if you cast another spell that requires concentration. You can't concentrate on two spells as once.

Losing consciousness. You lose your concentration on a spell if you are stunned or knocked unconscious. By extension, the spell ends if you die.

Suffering severe distractions. You can lose your concentration if an event or an effect distracts you too much. If an attack or another effect can disrupt your concentration in this way, its description says so. For instance, you might need to make a Constitution save to maintain your concentration while a giant octopus grasps you.

The DM might also decide that certain environmental phenomena, such as a wave crashing over you while you're on a storm-tossed ship, require you to make a DC 10 Constitution saving throw to maintain concentration on a spell.

Cantrips

A cantrip is a spell that can be cast at will, without using a spell slot and without having to be prepared in advance. Repeated castings have fixed the spell in the caster's mind and infused the caster with the magic needed to produce the effect over and over.

Wizards and certain other spellcasters know cantrips, as do members of particular races, such as high elves.

Rituals

A ritual is a version of a spell that takes longer to cast than normal, and it doesn't expend a spell

slot. A spellcaster can perform the ritual version of a spell only if the caster has a feature that grants the ability to do so. Wizards, clerics, druids, and bards can all perform rituals.

Casting Time. To cast a spell as a ritual, add 10 minutes to the spell's casting time.

Ritual Focus. A spellcaster must use a special object to focus the magic of a ritual: a component pouch or an object specified by the caster's ritual casting feature. The focus is a material component that is not consumed by the spell.

Combining Magical Effects

Although individual spells are fairly easy to adjudicate, sometimes the situation can be confusing when more than one spell is affecting the same creature.

Bonuses and penalties provided by spells all add together while the durations of those spells overlap, except for one case. Unless otherwise noted in a spell's description, the effects of the same spell cast multiple times (including higher- or lower-level versions of the same spell) do not add together. Instead, the highest bonus or worst penalty from those castings applies. Each spell still expires individually.