

RANDOM ENCOUNTER ACTIVITIES



BY DAWN & JEFF IBACH



Random Encounter Activities

DM's random encounter: "You see a bugbear."

Players: "We kill it!"

DM: "Roll initiative".

DM's random encounter: "You see a bugbear teaching two younger ones the art of stealth."

Players: "Ummm. Huh."

DM's random encounter: "You see a displacer beast."

Players: "We kill it!"

DM: "Roll initiative".

DM's random encounter: "You see a displacer beast up in a tree, resting, the remnants of a recent kill at the trunk."

Players: "Let's make our way...around it."

DM: "Roll stealth checks."

This is an article we wrote long ago for our own campaigns. Many adventures today sometimes detail what the individual(s) randomly rolled are doing. But if not, we were a little tired of a random encounter meaning initiative, combat and loss of resources with no storytelling aspect to it.

Sometimes combat is good (especially if you using it to wake everyone up or give them a kicking the head to get moving or make a decision), but if you like the idea of making your adventure (and campaign) more meaningful, consider extrapolating from the following list to help you paint more dynamic random encounters.

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TOOLBOX PUBLISHING

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Randomizing Random Encounters

By Dawn & Jeff Ibach

Randomize random encounters with these tables. Not every encounter needs to be a meeting of mature hunters intent on attacking the PCs. These encounter ideas are best suited for the following type of encounters: Beast, Celestial, Dragon, some Elementals, Fey, Fiend, Giant, Humanoid, and Monstrosity. You won't usually find Aberrations, Constructs, Oozes, Plants and Undead partaking in most of the suggestions below.

Activity (1d20)

- | | |
|------|-------------|
| 1 | Bathing |
| 2 | Digging |
| 3 | Eating |
| 4 | Fighting |
| 5 | Fishing |
| 6 | Grooming |
| 7 | Hiding |
| 8-10 | Hunting |
| 11 | Marking |
| 12 | Maintenance |
| 13 | Mating |
| 14 | Playing |
| 15 | Practicing |
| 16 | Resting |
| 17 | Searching |
| 18 | Sleeping |
| 19 | Spying |
| 20 | Worshipping |

Type (1d12)

- | | |
|------|-----------------------|
| 1 | Adolescent |
| 2 | Adult male and female |
| 3 | Female and young |
| 4 | Male and young |
| 5-11 | Mature Adult(s) |
| 12 | Young (lost?) |

Condition (1d12)

- | | |
|-----|------------------------|
| 1 | Dehydrated |
| 2-6 | Healthy |
| 7 | Poisoned |
| 8 | Rabid/diseased |
| 9 | Starving |
| 10 | Trapped |
| 11 | Wounded |
| 12 | Roll Twice and combine |

Here are some examples based on whether you roll an encounter with humanoids (trolls, elves, hobgoblins or monsters (owlbears, displacer beasts, perytons).

Bathing.

Humanoid or Monster—Using whatever is appropriate for its type, water(fall) dirt, mud, leaves, fire.

Digging.

Humanoid - Perhaps digging a new dungeon entrance, or for food or water, for treasure, setting up a pit trap or an ambush.

Monster – To bury food for later, hide offal or waste, or starting a nest or burrow.

Eating.

Humanoid - Generally most humanoids are not picky eaters and will eat anything they can kill or forage, sometimes as soon as they catch it or find it. Coming across such a grisly feast could prove hazardous.

Monster – It's downing its catch, and this could lead to either indifference (it is satisfied with the meal) or immediate combat (it's guarding the meal from others).

Fighting (Arguing).

Humanoid or Monster - A battle with each other, one or more of its own kind, an opposing creature, a personal squabble between two combatants, a fight between two tribes or packs for hunting area or a lair. Anything worth something is worth arguing for. Some examples might include the biggest or better tasting portion of a meal, a trinket, a shiny rock, the best weapon or boots, the best trail or best lookout spot.

Fishing.

Humanoid - Either on shore with a stick and line or in the water with a spear or bare hands are options.

Monster – Wading into the water, swiping or spearing the water with natural weapons.

Grooming.

Humanoid - Another example not used much by humanoids, but this could also be a form of pre-mating ritual. It could also be delusions of grandeur for the likes of derro, kobolds, or other slightly unhinged folk.

Monster – Removing parasites or debris, softening coat or dealing with wounds.

Hiding.

Humanoid or Monster - This could be an ambush approached from the unguarded side, a scout/lookout, or young unsure of his/her prowess. It could even be hiding from another monster that is hunting it.

Hunting.

Humanoid - A group of hunters is what is usually encountered but try opening up the possibilities. Consider a lone hunter, perhaps he is on a vision quest or is a scout. Perhaps it is a young male out to prove his worth by hunting a wild animal to kill in single combat and bring back the pelt as proof. Another example is a young shaman out to find his totem or collect herbs or animal parts or components.

Monster – Just out for food (or sport if that counts).

Marking.

Humanoid – Leaving clues on a trail to find one's way back, carving hunter's signs of warning or information about the area on a tree or stone for others.

Monster – Marking a territory with waste, other kills or skeletons littered around, or even signs of power like raking claws or leaving bite marks on trees or rocks.

Maintenance.

Humanoid - Sharpening a weapon, repairing armor, mending clothes.

Monster – Sharpening claws or teeth, or ensuring its body is suited for the coming activity.

Mating.

Humanoid or Monster - We won't get into this much, except to consider the rituals involved. Perhaps there is a battle to take place between the male and female or between two or more males for the female, or vice-versa. If they're already in the act, disturbing it would either lead to fleeing or immediate combat.

Playing.

Humanoid - Most evil humanoid races have games unfit for polite description, but any type of game that allows someone or something to be hurt or increases battle prowess is applicable.

Monster – More than likely young learning to hone their skills, or adults keeping each other in shape and ready.

Practicing.

Humanoid - Practicing weapons skills like archery or swordplay, craft skills (if they are known to have any they probably deal with weaponry) or learning to swim or fish.

Monster – Sparring for sport, engaging in hit and run tactics with its peers, or just honing other skills like stealth and perception.

Resting.

Humanoid – Storytelling or journal entry, meditation, just relaxing.

Monster – Zoning, resting after a battle or meal or just keeping watch over an area in a comfortable spot.

Searching.

Humanoid - Looking for escaped prey or prisoner, a hidden cache of loot or supplies, a trail, a hidden lair or temple entrance, or the adventurers themselves!

Monster – Looking for tracks, a new lair or place to nest or hide young, or something new that caught its eye or nose.

Sleeping.

Humanoid - A sleeping group of humanoids could have been forced from their home for some reason and are looking for another; they have traveled far and are exhausted. A sleeping scout, a hunter could have fallen asleep after gorging himself, and a sleeping lookout in a tree or behind cover are good examples.

Monster – For whatever reason, the trick is to decide if this is good way for the party to get a jump on it, or how to best sneak around and avoid it!

Spying.

Humanoid or Monster - Usually a lone spy is encountered, but a pair is possible. Spying out game trails, rival tribe or pack scouts, human encampments, or the adventurers.

Worshipping.

Humanoid – Anything from stories, to ritual dancing, a sacrifice or unusually quiet contemplation.

Monster – Depending on its intelligence, it could have some way of acknowledging a deity or other power, or maybe it is just relishing a natural condition of its environment, like rain, snow, a full moon, eclipse, etc.

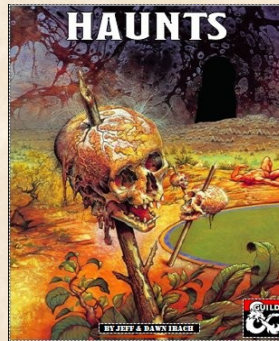
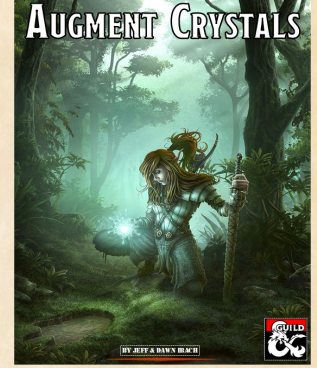
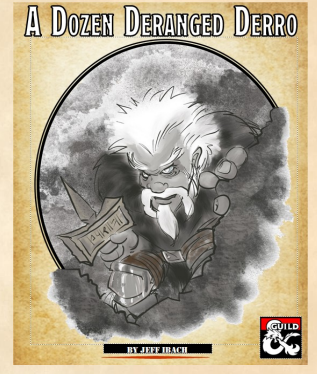
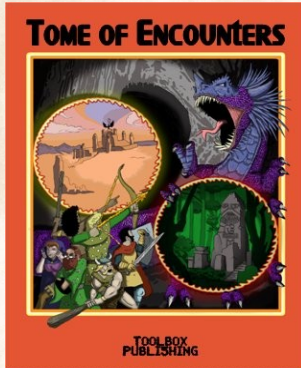
It was mentioned in the beginning that these ideas may not be of use for the likes of Aberrations, Constructs, Oozes, Plants and Undead. But, consider loosening up a little on stereotypes:

- A Ghoul family, elders and children following them.
- A Flump looking for its friends or spying on the party.
- A Construct, unfinished or in the form of a small child.
- An Ooze could certainly be hunting, eating or hiding.
- Vegepygmies are plants but could easily be involved in any of the activities above!

Random encounters can be made into so much more than a simple battle with a little creativity. Who knows, they may even spark a series of following adventurers based on the actions of the PCs or the encountered creatures themselves.

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This book is part of a new imprint focusing on quality, imaginative PDF support for 5th edition D&D through the DM's Guild website. The "Marauders Game Group" is a game club in New Jersey USA consisting of over 20 members collaborating to bring products you can trust and count on to deliver useful tools for your campaign.

