

# How to Play

The adventures that unfold in *DUNGEONS & DRAGONS* take place in your imagination. The Dungeon Master describes environments and circumstances, and you and your fellow players, using your imaginations, 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. Feel free to 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 a player, but the rules are for players and DMs alike.

## Basic Rules

At the core of the D&D rules, you do things in the game by first describing the thing you wish to do. The DM then responds to your action, and might ask you to use one of your ability scores to help determine success. You use your ability scores and their modifiers to interact with the game world in three basic ways: checks, attacks, and saving throws. See the "Ability Scores" section for details on each ability and for how an ability's modifier is determined.

## Checks

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

## Making a Check

To make a check, first refer to the ability on your character sheet. The ability has both a score and a modifier.

**Roll the Die:** To make a check, roll a d20 and add the relevant ability's modifier.

**Apply Bonuses and Penalties:** If a class feature, a skill, a spell, or some other effect gives you a bonus or a penalty to this check, apply it to your current total. Some bonuses and penalties apply to all checks made with a particular ability. Others apply only under certain circumstances.

**Announce the Total:** Tell the DM the result of your check.

## Determining Success

When you make a check, your DM picks 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 as determined by the DM.

## Contests

A contest pits two characters or creatures against each other, with success determined by each contender's luck and talent. Contests function like checks, with one major exception: 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 grab a magic ring that has fallen on the floor. In other cases, you might attempt an action that another creature actively opposes. If you attempt to push open a door that an orc holds shut from the other side, you make a 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 a check, except that two creatures each make a check. Any bonuses and penalties you apply when making a check with an ability 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 there is a tie, neither creature succeeds. The situation remains the same as it was before the contest. This might allow one creature to win the contest by default. If you and a bandit tie in a contest to grab a ring, neither of you grab hold of it. If you tie in a check to push open the door held shut by an orc, the door does not open. In this case, the orc prevents you from opening the door even though it did not win the contest.

## Attacks

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When you meet a ferocious monster, you likely will need to attack it to defeat it. An attack roll is similar to a check, except that the die roll is not against a normal DC. Instead, 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 or fewer, the creature typically falls to the ground, dying.

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

## Saving Throws

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A saving throw represents a desperate attempt to resist a spell, a trap, a poison, a disease, and similar threats. You make checks and attacks

when you decide to take an action. You make saving throws in response to events that happen to you.

### Making a Saving Throw

When your DM asks you to make a saving throw, he or she will tell you what ability to use to make the saving throw.

**Roll the Die:** To make a saving throw, roll a d20 and add the relevant ability's modifier.

**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. Some bonuses and penalties apply to all saves made with an ability. Others apply only under certain circumstances.

**Announce the Total:** Tell the DM the result of your check.

### Saving Throw Outcomes

When you make a saving throw, the effect you attempt to resist has a DC. Powerful effects have higher DCs, while weaker ones have low DCs.

If you fail the saving throw, you suffer the full force of the effect you attempted to resist. A spell might inflict its damage against you, you might fall into a pit that opens beneath you, or a poison might sap your vitality.

If you succeed on the saving throw, you either avoid the effect or suffer a diminished version of it. You might take cover and suffer only partial damage from a spell. As a pit opens, you might leap to solid ground. A poison might cause you to feel ill, but you are durable enough to shrug off some of its effects.

## Advantage and Disadvantage

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Sometimes, you have an edge in a situation. A magic item might grant you a burst of strength for a check, an enemy might be unaware of your attack, or your *cloak of fire resistance* might absorb much of a fire's heat. In such situations, you have advantage.

Other times, circumstances conspire against you. An evil cleric's vile curse might interfere with your attack. Some magical effect might attack your mind, thwarting your

concentration, or you might try to attack while hanging onto a cliff face. These are all situations where the odds are against you. In such situations, you have disadvantage.

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.

If you have advantage or disadvantage on a check, an attack roll, or a saving throw, you roll a second d20 when making that roll. You use the highest roll between the dice to determine your result if you have advantage and the lowest roll if you have disadvantage.

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

If you have advantage and disadvantage on the same check, attack roll, or saving throw, the advantage and the disadvantage cancel each other out for that roll.

# Ability Scores

Characters in D&D have six abilities: Strength, Dexterity, Constitution, Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma. A character also has a score attached to each ability. Your ability score describes in broad terms your talent, training, and competence when doing things related to that ability. The higher the score, the better your character is with 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 abilities' use, although a monster relies on its abilities far less than an adventurer does.

A score of 10 or 11 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

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

Your score determines the modifier for that ability. 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. Attacks, checks, and saving throws all involve ability modifiers.

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

And so on . . .

## Strength (Str.)

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Strength measures bodily power, athletic training, and the extent to which you can exert raw physical force. You typically use Strength to climb, jump, swim, strike a foe with a melee weapon, break down doors, lift gates, and burst restraints.

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

### Checks

The DM commonly asks you to use Strength when you make a check to climb a sheer wall, jump over a wide chasm, swim through rough water, bend bars, lift a gate, push a boulder, lift a tree trunk, or smash through a door.

### Saving Throws

The DM commonly asks you to use Strength when you make a saving throw to escape a grapple or bindings, 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.

### Attacks

You add your Strength modifier to attack rolls and damage rolls when using a variety of

Strength-based weapons, such as the longsword and the battleaxe.

## 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 checks, attack rolls, and saving throws. The maximum weight you can carry encumbered equals twice your unencumbered carrying capacity.

**Lift and Drag Weight:** Your Strength score tells you how much weight you can push, drag, or dead lift. To determine this weight, multiply your unencumbered carrying capacity by 5. While pushing or dragging weight in excess of your maximum weight, you 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 carrying, maximum, and lift, drag, and push weights. For a Tiny creature, halve these weights. The DM has more information on creature size.

## Dexterity (Dex.)

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Dexterity measures your character's physical agility, reflexes, balance, and poise. You typically use Dexterity to perform an acrobatic action, such as maintaining balance while moving across a precarious surface, contorting your body to wriggle through a tight space, striking a distant foe using a projectile, or slipping free from bindings.

Rogues and other characters who wear light armor prefer high Dexterity scores, since it helps them avoid enemy attacks. A character might also use Dexterity when making attacks with certain weapons: bows, slings, and the like. Any character who wants to react to danger quickly can benefit from a high Dexterity score.

## Checks

The DM commonly asks you to use Dexterity when you make a check to balance on a narrow ledge, sneak up on someone, tie a rope, wriggle free from bonds, or perform an acrobatic stunt.

## Saving Throws

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

## Attacks

You add your Dexterity modifier to your attack rolls and damage rolls for finesse weapons and missile weapons.

## Armor Class

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

## Initiative

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

## Constitution (Con.)

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Constitution measures your health and durability. You typically use Constitution to hold your breath, do a forced march, run a long distance, and perform a strenuous activity for a long period.

All characters benefit from having a high Constitution score.

## Checks

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

## 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 (Int.)

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Intelligence describes your mental acuity, your education, and your ability to reason, recall information, and employ logic to overcome challenges and complications. You typically use Intelligence to remember an important fact, find clues to a puzzle, or cast an arcane spell.

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

## Checks

The DM commonly asks you to use Intelligence when you make a check to recall a piece of lore, determine the properties of an object or trap, or decipher an ancient map.

## Saving Throws

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

## Magic Ability

Certain classes, such as wizards, use Intelligence as their magic ability. If Intelligence is your magic ability, you add your Intelligence modifier to the attack rolls of your spells, and the modifier helps determine the saving throw DCs of your spells.

## Wisdom (Wis.)

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Wisdom reflects how attuned you are to your surroundings, representing general perceptiveness, intuition, insight, and other, less tangible senses. Wisdom is also important for understanding divine edicts and expectations.

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.

## Checks

The DM commonly asks you to use Wisdom when you make a check to determine whether someone is lying, spot a hidden creature, discern a creature's mood, listen for noises, or sense a spirit's presence.

## 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 withstand an attempt to influence you.

## Magic Ability

Certain classes, such as clerics, use Wisdom as their magic ability. If Wisdom is your magic ability, you add your Wisdom modifier to the attack rolls of your spells, and the modifier helps determine the saving throw DCs of your spells.

## Charisma (Cha.)

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Charisma measures your ability to influence others and the strength of your personality. A high Charisma suggests a strong sense of purpose, whereas a low Charisma indicates a less self-assured personality. Charisma also determines how well you lead those who follow you.

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.

## Check

The DM commonly asks you to use Charisma when you make a check to negotiate a truce, calm a wild animal, deliver an inspiring speech, or deceive someone.

## 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

Certain classes use Charisma as their magic ability. If Charisma is your magic ability, you add your Charisma modifier to the attack rolls of your spells, and the 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 D&D 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 in a D&D game.

There are a few game mechanics used frequently while exploring: movement, stealth, and perception. The movement rules determine how far you can travel. They also cover how to swim, climb, jump, and so on. 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

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When you explore an area, the DM tracks your progress and describes what you see and encounter. Hours and days pass as you delve under the earth and travel through the countryside. When time is of the essence, the DM tracks 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:** Days are usually tracked by counting the number of long rests adventurers take. The DM might track 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:** 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 must track each action you take.

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

## Movement

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Each character has a speed value, 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, unless told otherwise.

While exploring and fighting, you are bound 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, you encounter **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 simply 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 segment of your move from your speed until it is spent or until you are done moving.

**Walk:** Your speed determines how far in feet you can walk during a round.

Outside combat, you can double your speed by hustling. Doing so in combat typically 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 reach up to 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. Otherwise, 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. Otherwise, you can rise only a number of feet up to your Strength modifier (minimum 1).

In either case, you can extend your arms half your height above you.

**Climb:** When you climb a vertical surface that has sufficient handholds, every 5 feet you climb costs 5 extra feet of movement. A slippery vertical surface or one with few handholds usually requires a check to climb. You cannot climb across a ceiling or 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. Rough waters usually require a check to swim through.

**Stand Up:** When you are prone, you can stand up as part of a move. Doing so costs 5 feet of movement.

**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.

## Stealth

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When a creature tries to hide, it must rely on its Dexterity to remain unnoticed. A creature can attempt a Dexterity check to sneak around, moving quietly and relying on 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 move silently to avoid detection. If the creature might see you, you need to keep behind cover or stay in heavily obscured areas to remain hidden.

When you attempt to hide from one or more creatures, your Dexterity check is opposed 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. Note your result, and use it as your check for all contests until you are discovered or stop hiding.

Ties are a special case in this contest. If a creature is already aware of you before the contest, you fail to hide. If was not aware of you before the contest, you remain hidden in the case of a tie.

## Conditions for Stealth

In order to avoid detection, you need some way to hide. You can't simply 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 an appropriate size, such as a slumbering dragon. Regardless of what obscures you, the thing must cover at least half your body for you to hide.

**Obscured Areas:** An environmental phenomenon that heavily obscures you can also provide a means to hide. A heavily obscured area typically contains darkness, opaque fog, or dense foliage. Some monsters and characters have special abilities that allow them to try to hide even in areas that are lightly obscured. A lightly obscured area typically contains dim light, fog, or moderate foliage.

**Staying Quiet:** It's assumed that you try to avoid making noise while hiding, and your Dexterity check includes 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.

**Being Detected:** If you lose the conditions needed to remain hidden, you are automatically spotted, as long as a creature is looking in your direction. You might hide around a corner, and then creep past a guard who is looking the other way.

## Benefits of Being Hidden

In addition to the obvious benefit—your enemies don't know where you are—being hidden grants a few special benefits.

**Cannot Be Targeted:** A creature from which you are hidden cannot target you with attacks or spell effects that require it to pick a specific target. You can still be affected by area effects.

**Advantage on Attacks:** When you attack a creature from which you are hidden, you have advantage on that attack roll. Usually attacking reveals your position.

## Perception

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As you move through a dungeon, walk along a forest trail, or search a sage's study, you rely on your senses 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

As a general rule, your Wisdom 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 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 of 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 gets a little blurry if you try to actively extend your senses in an effort to notice something around you. Making an effort to notice something sounds much like finding, but it still relies on Wisdom. If you stop and spend a moment to scan the surrounding trees,

or press your ear to a door to hear what might lurk beyond, you're still relying on Wisdom.

The Search skill, mostly relevant to finding, typically modifies an Intelligence check. The Listen and Spot skills, however, are all about noticing, and they typically modify Wisdom checks.

### 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 even a small chance of success.

Since traps and other dangers might protect hidden objects, this specificity is important for the game to remain fair. Just as the DM should never dictate your character's actions, so too should you be sure to make your intentions clear to the DM when searching for clues and other hidden things.

### Noticing or Finding a Hidden Creature

When a creature is hiding from your character, you normally oppose 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 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 any number of other signs.

The DM generally asks for an Intelligence check if you're specifically searching for clues to the 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 a creature.

## Listening at a Door

As your character explores a dungeon or 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 lair in the area, you might hear the casual conversation of bored sentries or a fierce argument between two rival would-be chieftains. If a dragon sleeps on its treasure pile, you might hear the slow rhythm 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 typically asks you to make a Wisdom check, setting the DC based on the volume of whatever you might hear.

# Combat

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

## The Combat Sequence

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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.

The beginning and the end of a round seldom matter in the game. 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 half 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. Anyone who was unaware of their opponents' approach or presence is surprised. A creature can be surprised even if its allies aren't.

**Effect of Surprise:** A creature who 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. Fast, nimble creatures get to attack or move first, followed by slower ones.

**Determining Initiative:** To determine initiative, each participant in a battle rolls a d20 and adds its Dexterity modifier. A group of identical creatures can roll once for the entire group, with each member of that group acting at the same time.

The DM lists the combatants in order of the highest initiative result to the lowest. This is the order in which they act during each round.

**Resolving Ties:** If there is a tie, the tied creatures act in order of Dexterity, highest first. If there is still a tie, the tied creatures roll a d20 each to determine their order, highest roll going first. If there are still ties, continue re-rolling until they are resolved.

## Taking a Turn

When you take a 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 at all as you watch the battle unfold.

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

**Reactions:** Some actions allow you to act when it isn't your turn, usually in response to a trigger. Such an action is called a reaction. For instance, you might take an action that causes you to forgo attacking on your turn so that you can clobber an owlbear as a reaction when the monster approaches on its turn. The most

common way to take a reaction is to ready an action (see “Actions in Combat” below).

When you take a reaction, you can’t take another one until the start of your next turn. Also, any effect that denies you the ability to take actions also prohibits you from taking a reaction.

## Movement in Combat

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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:** In combat, an ally lets you move through the space that he or she occupies, but a hostile creature does not. You must maneuver around your foes.

**Opportunity Attacks:** If you try to move beyond a hostile creature’s reach, that creature can take a reaction to make a melee attack against you. This attack is called an opportunity attack. The creature cannot make an opportunity attack against you if you are disengaging (see “Actions in Combat” below).

## Actions in Combat

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This section lists the typical actions you can take during your turn. During most rounds, you might attack with a sword, fire a bow, cast a spell, and so forth. 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. On a hit, the creature drops to 0 hit points. If the creature was already at 0 hit points or fewer, it dies.

### Disarm

You knock a weapon, or other object, out of a creature’s grasp by making a successful Strength check against that creature’s Strength or Dexterity check (the creature chooses the ability). If the creature is armed with a melee weapon and you aren’t, you have disadvantage on your check. If you succeed and have a hand free, you can snatch the item.

### Disengage

When you disengage, you move up to 10 feet. During this movement, you can leave any hostile creature’s reach without provoking an opportunity attack from it.

### Dodge

When you choose this action, you focus entirely on avoiding attacks. Until your next turn, you gain a +4 bonus to AC and to Dexterity saving throws. You lose this bonus if you cannot move or take actions for any reason, such as if you are paralyzed by a monster’s attack or become stuck in quicksand.

### Escape a Grab

You free yourself from another creature’s grasp by making a successful Strength or Dexterity check against the Strength check of the creature grabbing you.

## Grab

You use a free hand to grab a creature no more than one size category larger than you by making a successful Strength check against the creature's Strength or Dexterity check (the creature chooses the ability). If you succeed, the creature is restrained. You can release it at any time, and you must do so if you can't take actions or if you lose control of the grabbing limb.

## Initiating a Contest

Battle often involves pitting your might, agility, or wits against your foe's. Such a challenge is represented by a contest. This section includes the most common contests that require an action in combat: disarm, escape a grab, grab, knock down, and push. The DM can use these contests as models for improvising others.

## Help

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

Your DM will typically require you to have at least a 10 in the ability score related to the task. Some tasks are so specialized that the DM might further require you to have training in a relevant skill.

## Hide

In the middle of a battle, it is often advantageous to drop out of sight, but doing so can be tricky. Under normal circumstances, trying to hide takes up your action. See "Stealth" in the "Exploration" section for rules on hiding.

## Hustle

With this 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, provided it is no more than one size category larger than you, by

making a successful Strength check against that creature's Strength or Dexterity check (the creature chooses the ability).

## Push

You push a creature no more than one size category larger than you by making a successful Strength check against that creature's Strength or Dexterity check (the creature chooses the ability), shoving the creature back 5 feet. The larger creature in the contest has advantage on the check.

## 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 can spend the action on your turn readying yourself to spring back into action later in the round.

When you ready an action, you decide what event or circumstance that is perceivable to your character will cause you to react, and you determine what your reaction will be. 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 cast *shocking grasp* on it."

When the trigger occurs, you can take your reaction right after the trigger finishes. If the reaction interrupts another creature's turn, that creature can continue its turn after the reaction.

After you have taken the reaction, your place in the initiative order changes so that you're directly before the creature or the event that triggered the reaction. If you ignore the trigger or it doesn't occur, you simply wait for your next turn to take place as normal.

## 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 and magic items, from a *horn of blasting* to a handful of caltrops, are useful

tools in combat. By default, using the special ability of such an item requires an action. An individual item's description tells you what happens when you use it.

Many of the most common interactions with items—drawing or sheathing a sword, moving through a door that opens easily, picking up a scroll, withdrawing a potion from your backpack, and the like—do not require an action. You are generally 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, a DM could reasonably expect you to use an action to open a stuck door.

## Improvising an Action

Your ability scores allow you to do things not covered by the other actions in this section, such as breaking down doors, swinging on chandeliers, sliding down railings, collapsing pillars, 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 check you need to make, if any, to determine success or failure.

## Attack Basics

This section first gives general rules for attacks, and then describes the rules that apply to melee attacks and ranged attacks.

Attacks generally have the following structure.

1. **Choose a Target:** Before you attack, pick a creature or an object within your attack's range to be the target of the attack.
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 and 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 with 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 depending on 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 equals or exceeds the target's Armor Class (AC), the attack hits.

**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 rules for critical hits in the "Damage Rolls" section).

## Cover

Cover represents 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 it. 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 on 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 massive 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 on the opposite side of the cover.

**Total Cover:** A target has total cover if it is completely covered by an obstacle. Under normal circumstances, a target with total cover cannot be targeted by an attack or a spell.

## Attacking an Unseen Target

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

**Disadvantage:** When you attack a target that you can't see, you have disadvantage on the attack roll. When you make such an attack, you must at least be aware of the target's location, either because of a noise it has made or because of some other sign.

**Hidden Targets:** If you want to attack a creature that is not only unseen to you but also hidden from you, you must first locate the creature, typically by taking an action to search for it (see "Actions in Combat"). Until you pinpoint the creature, you cannot target it with attacks, although you can potentially affect it with an area effect, such as a fireball.

## 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 melee weapons at the same time, you can attack with both of them, provided at least one of them is a light weapon. Make two separate attacks, one for each weapon, with disadvantage on each attack roll. You cannot

have advantage on either attack, and you do not add the relevant ability modifier (usually Strength) to either attack's damage.

## Ranged Attacks

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

**Range:** You can make ranged attacks against targets within your weapon's range. You can't target something outside your attack's range.

A weapon lists two ranges. The first number indicates the weapon's normal range. The second number indicates long range. You have disadvantage when attacking targets beyond normal range and out to long range.

**Ranged Attacks in Melee:** When a hostile creature is within 5 feet of you and you make a ranged attack against a target on the other side of that creature, the target has three-quarters cover, unless the hostile creature in your way is smaller than you.

## Damage Rolls

Each weapon and spell indicates the damage it deals, such as 1d8 or 2d8. Roll the dice, add any modifiers (including the ability modifier you used to make the attack), and apply the damage to your target. Magic weapons, special abilities, and so forth can grant a bonus to your damage. In addition, some abilities give you extra damage represented by bonus dice.

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.

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

**Critical Hit:** If your attack is a critical hit, it deals maximum damage. Treat the damage dice you roll, including bonus dice from abilities such as Sneak Attack, as if you rolled their maximum results.

A character or a monster who has levels in a character class deals even more damage on a critical hit. At 1st level, you deal 2d6 extra damage on a critical hit, provided the attack deals damage (you roll this damage; it is not maximized). At each odd-numbered level after

1st, this extra damage increases by 1d6, to a maximum of 6d6.

**Damage Type:** All damage has a type. For example, a longsword deals slashing damage, an arrow deals piercing damage, and the fireball spell deals fire damage. Most of the time, the damage type isn't important, but some creatures have resistances and vulnerabilities to damage, which can decrease or increase the amount of damage dealt.

**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.

## Damage and Dying

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Whenever a creature takes damage, it subtracts that damage from its hit points. Creatures with more hit points are more durable and difficult to kill. Those with fewer hit points are more fragile.

Injuries typically have no effect in the game until you drop to 0 hit points or fewer. At that time, you are dying.

### Hit Points

Your hit points represent a combination of several factors. They include your physical durability and overall health, your speed and agility to avoid harm, and your overall level of energy. They also account for luck, divine favor, and other mystic factors.

In short, hit points are an abstraction. Each creature has a hit point maximum, which is the total of its Hit Die rolls, Constitution modifier, and any other modifiers. When your current hit point total is no less than half your hit point maximum, you typically show no signs of injury. When you drop below that threshold, you show signs of wear, such as cuts and bruises. An attack that reduces you to 0 hit points or fewer strikes you directly, leaving a bleeding injury or other trauma, or it simply knocks you unconscious.

### Dying (0 Hit Points or Fewer)

When your current hit points are 0 or fewer, you are dying. You become unconscious and fall prone to the ground. While you're unconscious, you cannot act or move, and you do not perceive your surroundings.

**Death Saving Throws:** On each of your turns after you begin dying, you make a special saving throw—called a death saving throw—to determine whether you creep closer to death or you hang onto life. Make a DC 10 Constitution saving throw. On a success, you remain dying, yet your condition does not worsen. On a failure, you take 1d6 damage. This damage cannot be reduced in any way.

If you succeed on three of these saving throws, you immediately become stabilized. These successes need not be consecutive.

**Monsters and Dying:** The DM rarely has a monster go through the process of dying. Instead, a monster that drops to 0 hit points typically just dies.

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

### Dead

You die when your hit points drop to a negative number that equals your Constitution score plus your character level. If you're 5th level and have a 14 Constitution, for example, you die when your hit points drop to -19.

### Stabilized

While stabilized, you remain at your current hit point total and no longer need to make death saving throws. You remain unconscious while stabilized until you regain at least 1 hit point or until after 2d6 hours have passed, at which point you regain 1 hit point.

### Nonlethal Damage

An attacking creature can deliver nonlethal strikes instead of lethal ones when making a melee weapon attack, such as with a sword, a mace, or a fist. An attacker who declares that he or she is making a nonlethal attack deals damage as normal. However, if the damage

would reduce the target to 0 hit points or fewer, the target simply has 0 hit points and falls unconscious. If the unconscious creature takes any damage, it begins dying as normal.

## Healing

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You heal whenever you regain hit points through magical or mundane means.

When you regain hit points, you add them to your current hit point total. You can't have more hit points than your hit point maximum. Any hit points gained in excess of your maximum are lost.

If you would regain hit points while your current hit points are below 0, the effect first brings your current hit point total to 0 and then you add the hit points regained to your current hit point total. So if you are at -5 hit points and Jozan the cleric casts *cure light wounds* to let you regain 8 hit points, you have 8 hit points.

## Resting

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The most expedient method of healing is through magic, but when magic is not available, you can also 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, about 10 minutes long, during which you catch your breath, eat, drink, and clean and bind wounds.

Certain abilities and items, such as a healer's kit, allow you to 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 to it your Constitution modifier. You regain hit points equal to the total. You can decide to spend additional Hit Dice after each roll. Once you have spent all your Hit Dice, you must take a long rest to regain them.

### Long Rest

A long rest is a period of extended downtime, about 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 you take any strenuous action during a long rest, such as attacking, taking damage, or casting a spell, you must start the rest over.

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 Hit Dice.

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

### Optional Rule: Slower Recovery

If you are the DM and would like recovery to be a slower process, particularly in a grim and gritty campaign, consider one of these options.

**Slower Hit Point Recovery:** At the end of a long rest, you regain no hit points, but you do regain all your Hit Dice and can spend any number of them without using a healer's kit.

**Slower Hit Dice Recovery:** At the end of a long rest, you regain all your hit points but not all your Hit Dice. You regain a number of Hit Dice equal to 1 + your Constitution modifier.

**All-Around Slower Recovery:** At the end of a long rest, you regain no hit points, you regain a number of Hit Dice equal to 1 + your Constitution modifier, and you can spend any number of them without using a healer's kit use.

### Experimental Rule 1: Rests

This rule is an experimental approach to resting, here for you to try out as part of the playtest.

**Short Rest:** To take a short rest, you must spend at least an hour doing nothing more strenuous than eating, drinking, standing watch, or cleaning and binding wounds. You must have at least 1 hit point to take a short rest. For each hour you rest, regain your level + your Constitution modifier in hit points.

**Long Rest:** If you rest for an extended period during which you sleep for at least 6 hours and perform light activity (reading, talking, eating, or standing watch) for no more than 2 hours, you continue to regain your level + your Constitution modifier in hit points for each hour you rest, plus an additional number of hit points equal to your Constitution score. If you take any strenuous action during a long rest, such as attacking, taking

damage, or casting a spell, you do not gain the additional hit points.

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

## Experimental Rule 2: Healing and Rests

This rule replaces the rules for Hit Dice and resting.

**Bloodied:** You have a bloodied value equal to half your hit point maximum. When your hit points are less than or equal to your bloodied value, you are bloodied.

**Resting:** For every 5 minutes you rest, you regain hit points equal to 1 + your level + your Constitution modifier (minimum equal to your level). You can regain up to your hit point maximum, unless you are bloodied. In that case, you can regain hit points only up to your bloodied value.

**Refocus:** You can use your action to attempt to draw on your inner strength and endurance. Make a DC 10 Constitution check. If you succeed, you regain hit points equal to 1 + your Constitution modifier.

## Conditions

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

A condition is normally temporary, although potent magic or a grievous injury might cause a condition to last for a long time. The effect that imposes a condition specifies how long the condition lasts. Additionally, a condition's effects cannot be compounded by imposing the same condition on a creature more than once. A condition is either present or not.

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 effects that might be appropriate for the condition in certain circumstances. For

example, an intoxicated character normally makes checks with disadvantage, but the DM might decide that Charisma checks to influence ale-loving dwarves don't suffer this drawback.

### Blinded

- The creature cannot see.
- The creature's speed is halved.
- Attacks against the creature have advantage, and the creature's attacks have disadvantage.

Creatures that rely on senses other than sight to perceive their surroundings are usually immune to this condition.

### Charmed

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

### Deafened

- The creature can't hear anything. As a result, anyone attempting to sneak up on the creature succeeds automatically, unless the creature has a chance to see them or sense them through some other ability.

### Ethereal

- The creature exists within the Ethereal Plane. It has a spectral appearance.
- The creature takes only half damage from non-ethereal sources and deals only half damage to non-ethereal targets. Neither effect applies to force damage.
- The creature can pass through non-ethereal creatures. It can also pass through solid objects, but it is blinded while doing so and cannot target anything but the object while inside it.

### Frightened

- The creature has disadvantage on checks and attacks while the source of its fear is within line of sight.

## Invisible

- The creature is impossible to see. For the purpose of hiding, it is heavily obscured. The creature can still be detected by the noise it makes or the tracks it leaves.
- Attacks against the creature have disadvantage.

## Intoxicated

- The creature has disadvantage on attacks and 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.
- Damage against the creature is reduced by 1d6.

## Paralyzed

- The 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.
- Attacks against the creature have advantage.

## Prone

- The creature's only movement option is to crawl, unless it stands up.
- The creature takes a -2 penalty to attack rolls.
- Any melee attack against the creature has advantage, whereas any ranged attack has disadvantage, unless the attacker is within 10 feet of the creature.

## Restrained

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

A restrained creature is usually entangled, ensnared, or otherwise caught in a particular area.

## Stunned

- The creature is only semiconscious and cannot move or take actions.
- The creature automatically fails Strength and Dexterity saving throws.
- Attacks against the creature have advantage.

## Unconscious

- The 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.
- Attacks against the creature have advantage.

# Magic

Most spells come in two types: arcane and divine. A character who can cast spells typically learns the magical art from his or her class. Wizards cast arcane spells, and clerics cast divine spells. 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

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A spell's description is broken up into a few distinct sections.

**Name, Level, and Descriptors:** The description starts with the spell's name. The next line gives the spell's level and includes any additional descriptors. For instance, many spells are part of a school of magic such as illusion or necromancy. Such tags are included here. They have no rules themselves, but other rules refer to them.

These two lines are typically followed by a paragraph or two describing a variety of things about the spell, including its history and perceivable effects.

**Requirement:** Some spells require special circumstances or specific items to cast them. Such requirements are noted here. If you cannot meet a spell's requirements, you cannot cast it. The 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. It tells you what happens according to the rules when you cast the spell.

**Ritual:** If the spell can be used as a ritual, the details for using it in that way and the effects of using as a ritual are described here. A character can cast spells as rituals only if a class feature or other benefit allows it.

**Special:** If there are any special rules for casting the spell, they are noted here.

## Casting a Spell

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Spells are commonplace among the heroes and villains of DUNGEONS & DRAGONS. When a character casts any spell, the same basic rules are followed, regardless of the character's class or the spell's effects.

First, you must have access to a spell to cast 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 are its verbal component, and you must complete intricate hand motions with at least one of your hands, which are the spell's somatic component. Some spells also have material components that are required for their casting.

If you can't complete a spell's component, you are unable to cast a spell. Thus, if you are silenced or don't have a hand free, you cannot cast a spell.

## Casting Time

Casting a typical spell requires a single action, about 6 seconds of reciting a magical formula and completing a set of hand motions.

A few spells can be cast as reactions. These spells take a fraction of a second and are usually cast in response to some event. For instance, the feather fall spell allows you to float safely to the ground the moment you fall into a pit. Such a spell can usually be cast as an action or a reaction, with different effects depending on how you use it. If a spell can be cast in reaction to something, the spell

description tells you exactly when you can do so.

## Range

A spell's description specifies its range. The range is the maximum distance from you that you can place the spell's effect. The effect might extend beyond that range. All that matters is that when you cast the spell, you place its initial effect or chose a target that is not beyond the range.

Most spells have a range expressed in feet. Some spells, such as *cure light wounds*, can target only a creature (including yourself) that you touch. In other words, you must be able to reach the target.

Other spells affect only the caster. For example, the *shield* spell protects you, and only you.

## Targets

A spell specifies how many creatures it targets or what area of effect it covers. If a spell targets one creature, it says so. If it targets more than one creature, it specifies the maximum number of creatures it can target.

You cannot target a creature with a spell if that creature has total cover.

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

You must be able to see a creature that you target directly with a spell. This requirement does not apply when you include a creature in an area of effect. A particular spell might override one or both of these rules.

## Areas of Effect

Many spells have an effect over an area. A *fireball* explodes, burning an entire group of orcs. A *cone of cold* blasts forth, freezing a gang of ogres in place. These spells 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. Each shape specifies how you position its point of origin. Typically, a point of origin is a point in space, but some spells require the point to be a creature or an object.

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

The gas or other substance of a cloud expands outward from the point of origin. It expands the distance of its radius, moving around objects such as walls and pillars. A cloud might continue to grow or even move, depending on the specific spell.

**Cone:** A cone extends in a direction of your choice from its point of origin. A cone's width at a given point is equal to its 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. If no unblocked straight line extends from that point to a spot within the cone, that spot is not included in the area of effect.

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

**Cylinder:** A cylinder's point of origin is at the center of a circle of a particular radius given in the spell. The spell's effect then shoots downward or upward (your choice) from the circle's surface. The point of origin is included in the spell's effect. You can position the circle at an angle and determine from which side of the circle the energy erupts.

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

**Line:** A line extends from its point of origin in a straight line up to its length and covers an area indicated by its width. The line's width is its diameter. The point of origin for a line is not included in its area of effect, unless you decide otherwise.

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

The energy in a sphere 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 area of effect.

## Spells and Saving Throws

Many spells specify that a target can make a saving throw to avoid some or all of a spell's effects. If a spell requires a saving throw, the spell specifies the ability score that the target uses for the save. The DC to resist a spell equals 10 + your relevant magic ability modifier, unless specified otherwise.

The spell specifies what happens to a target on a successful or a failed save.

## Attack Spells

Some spells let you make an attack roll. You resolve such an attack as normal, except that the attack seldom relies on Strength or Dexterity. An attack spell almost always requires you to use your magic ability, which is specified in the class or other source that gave you the spell. For instance, wizards use Intelligence to make their spell attacks, and clerics use Wisdom.

## Duration

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

If there is no period of time specified in a spell, the spell's effect is instantaneous. The spell harms, heals, creates, or alters something or someone in a way that cannot be dispelled, for 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 your concentration, such a spell ends, although some spells trigger a mishap when your concentration is broken, as noted in those spells' descriptions.

A spell that requires concentration tells you that it does in its description. You can freely end your concentration at any time. Normal

activity, such as moving and attacking, does not interfere with it. Here are the things that can interfere.

**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 at once.

**Taking damage.** Whenever you take damage while you are concentrating on a spell, you must make a Constitution save to maintain your concentration. The save DC equals half the damage you take. If you take damage from multiple sources, such as an arrow and a dragon's breath, you must make a saving throw against each source of damage separately.

**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 something 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 save to maintain concentration on a spell.

## Combining Magical Effects

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While individual spells are fairly easy to adjudicate, sometimes it can be confusing when more than one spell affects the same creature.

## Stacking

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

## Order of Effects

When determining the effects of multiple spells, apply the first spell cast on a creature first, then the second one, and so forth.

## Rituals

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A ritual is a version of a spell that takes longer to cast and sometimes requires special materials to complete. The advantage of casting a spell as a ritual is that you do not have to prepare the spell ahead of time. The drawback is that completing a ritual takes several minutes and consumes expensive magical components.

**Prerequisite:** You cannot use a spell as a ritual unless you have a special ability or a class feature that lets you do so.

**Time:** Performing a ritual takes more time than simply casting a spell. Each ritual specifies the time needed to complete it. During this time, you can do nothing but work on the ritual. As with casting a spell, you need to be able to speak and move your hands in order to perform a ritual.

**Material Components:** To complete a ritual, you must expend material components as fuel for the magic you have gathered and shaped. A ritual has a gold piece cost associated with it, which represents a set of generic magical components, such as silver dust or rare alchemical ingredients. A ritual component pouch provides you with the materials you need.

When you complete the ritual and its effects begin, the material components needed for it are consumed.

In some cases, a ritual requires a specific item to complete it. Such items are specified in the spell's description.