



STAYING OUT OF THE DARK

A Web Enhancement for the *Book of Challenges*

When getting ready to face the encounters in the *Book of Challenges*, or any other venture underground, your chances for success (and survival) will improve if you're prepared to assess the Dungeon Environment properly. All too often, players concentrate on their characters' combat abilities and neglect equipment that serves other purposes.

This web enhancement suggests some magic and equipment that player characters (PCs) might overlook before entering a challenging dungeon. This bonus material is exclusive to the official DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® website: <www.wizards.com/dnd>.

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DON'T GO IN BLIND

As characters, your first priority is making sure you can see where you're going and what you're doing. Unless you have darkvision, you'll be effectively blind and all too vulnerable in a dungeon setting unless you have an artificial light source.

Even if you have darkvision, you'll often need light. For example, you might need to see farther than your darkvision allows, or you might need to discern colors (darkvision is black and white only).

If you have low-light vision, you'll need light to see, but you can see twice as far with that light than others can. If you have a really good light source, your low-light vision will let you see as far as many creatures with darkvision, and in color as well.


At some time during your adventuring career, you're going to find yourself separated from your comrades, so always carry your own light source.

There are some down sides to carrying artificial light, and it pays to be aware of them:

First, most nonmagical illumination uses fire, and that means you have to light it. Lighting a torch or candle with flint and steel takes a full-round action, which probably isn't your first choice when you walk into an ambush.

Flame doesn't work underwater, and if you get caught in a tight space your torch or lantern just might burn up all your air and suffocate you. Also, flames can be blown out (see Weather Hazards in Chapter 3 of the *DUNGEON MASTER'S Guide*).

Of course, carrying around a flame isn't all bad, because fire can be a useful tool or weapon. You can use a flame to test for air currents, keep warm, melt soft materials (such as wax), and set things alight. Even more importantly, flames cannot be extinguished by *dispel magic* or similar effects, and they keep burning in *antimagical fields*.



A second, and more important disadvantage to carrying artificial light is that light makes you visible. When you're hiding or skulking about under an *invisibility* effect, carrying a light source broadcasts your position. Further, enemies can see your light long before that light reveals the foe. How long? It is said that the human eye can detect the light from a match up to 2 miles away over an open plain on a dark, clear night. Of course, the viewer at that distance sees only a pinpoint of light, but in a place where there ought to be no light all—such as a dungeon—a mere pinpoint is all that's necessary to alert the residents to an intrusion. Fortunately, most dungeons don't offer your foes a clear line of sight 2 miles long.

To add insult in injury, others can see what your light reveals and they can see it from a considerable distance away. As a rule of thumb, anything within the radius of your light is clearly visible to anyone within a distance equal to 10 times the light's radius. For example, a candle illuminates a radius of 5 feet. If you find a door by candlelight, anyone within 50 feet of that door also sees the door.

This phenomenon can work in your favor. If you're carrying a light, your friends probably can also see what you see.

A third disadvantage to carrying artificial light is that you usually have to hold it in your hand, which means that you don't have that hand available to wield a weapon, hold a shield, or cast a spell. Fortunately, dropping an item is a free action and most (but not all) light sources will stay lit after you do so.

DIVINATIONS

Once you've made sure you can see, it's time to consider ways to notice things you can't see. You'll want the ability to assess potential threats and to scout the terrain ahead without revealing your presence. There isn't very much mundane equipment that can accomplish these tasks, so it's worth expending a few spell slots or cash on some divination spells or magic items.

WHAT'S AVAILABLE

Here are some options to consider, arranged in order of price. The list includes selected magic items and spells that shed light, effects that let you see in the dark, and divinations to help you determine what lies ahead. Many items on the list serve several functions at once.

The cost listed for spells marked with an asterisk (*) is

the market price for the most inexpensive scroll you can buy that contains the spell. If you have the Scribe Scroll feat and are willing to spend some XP, you'll pay less. You'll pay nothing for the spell if you or a party member simply casts it, but it's often better to have the spells on this list on scrolls (or stored in other items) for those times when you need them rather than using up the party's available spell slots on them.

Cost: 1 cp to 1 gp

Candle (1 cp): A candle lasts an hour but illuminates a paltry 5-foot radius, allowing you just enough light to keep from stubbing your toes while giving nearby a enemies a good look at you.

A candle flame is small enough to blow out in even a moderate breeze. A dropped candle usually will go out (75% chance).

On the other hand, a candle is dirt cheap and very light (it has no weight worth noting), so you can carry a bundle of them. You might also want to carry a few candles as a backup light source in case you lose your primary source.


Candles prove useful for things other than light. You can use the melted wax or tallow from a candle to mark a trail or to seal small openings. It also can serve as a moderately effective adhesive (in some cases) or even a lubricant (in other cases). You can even use melted candle wax or tallow to stick a candle to some surface (the top of your helmet perhaps) so you don't have to hold it in your hand.

Torch (1 cp): A torch burns for an hour and casts light in a respectable 20-foot radius, which is far enough to suffice for melee combat but useless for most ranged combat.

It takes a strong wind to blow out a torch, and strong winds are rare underground. A torch usually will keep burning if you drop it.

At 1 lb. each, you probably don't want to carry more than a dozen torches or so, but that's sufficient for most dungeon expeditions. If you ever find that you need to extend a torch's burning time, try splitting it in half (this is best done with an axe or hatchet, but any slashing weapon will do) and burning each half. Half a split torch will burn for an hour and shed light in a 10-foot radius.

Torches have a variety of alternative uses. You can use them as probes (they're about 2 feet long) to test or investigate areas where you'd rather not stick your hands. If your probing finds a trap or patch of green slime, you're only out a copper piece. Because torches are soaked in pitch or tallow, an unlit torch is a trifle



sticky, and you can actually pick up small things with it. You can use a lit torch as a weapon. Treat it as a small club, except that a hit deals 1d3 points of fire damage. You also can make a campfire out of a few torches, or use them to light a pile of damp wood you've collected.

Common Lamp (1sp + 1sp per pint of oil): This device illuminates a 15-foot radius, so it's slightly inferior to a torch. It burns six hours on a pint of oil.

The lamp's small, open flame will blow out in even a moderate breeze. If you drop the lamp the oil spills out in a burning puddle; see the section on oil in Chapter 7 of the *Player's Handbook*. You can splash the oil on another creature to deal some fire damage, but you also can spill the burning oil on yourself if you fall down while holding the lamp.

Cost: 1 to 100 gp

Tindertwig (1 gp): These devices are intended for lighting fires or other light sources, but they shed light in a 5-foot radius when struck, and they burn for 1 round. With a tindertwig, you can light a candle, torch, lantern, or other small fire as a standard action instead of a full-round action. Lighting the tindertwig itself is a standard action.

Sunrod (2 gp): These foot-long rods shed light in a 30-foot radius and glow for six hours.

Sunrods can't blow out, and they work underwater or in very wet places where flames won't burn. If you decide you don't want the light to be seen, you can just stuff the sunrod into an opaque container or under your clothes. Unlike a magical light source, a sunrod works in *antimagic fields* and cannot be dispelled.

Hooded Lantern (7 gp + 1sp per pint of oil): The standards for dungeon adventuring, these lanterns light a 30-foot radius and burn for six hours on a pint of oil. Their protected flames will blow out only in severe winds, and they come equipped with shutters so you can douse the light without putting out the flame. In a pinch, you can throw the lantern or dump it out to create a pool of burning oil.

Steel Mirror (10 gp): This item proves most useful for peeking around corners or into openings without exposing yourself to attack. Just stick the mirror into a weapon or unlit torch with a blob of wax (from a candle, perhaps) and then hold the mirror at an angle. Be aware that the mirror reverses things (left for right, and vice versa).

You might also try viewing strange inscriptions in a mirror—those weird hieroglyphics might just be familiar letters written backwards.

Bullseye Lantern (12 gp + 1 sp per pint of oil): This device throws light in a cone 60 feet long and 20 feet wide at the far end; to a creature with low-light vision, the cone measures 120 feet long and 40 feet wide. You have to decide where the cone is pointing. On your turn, you can re-aim the cone as a free action.

The bullseye lantern's directional light might allow foes to sneak up on you, but the lantern's great range makes it an excellent supplement to other forms of illumination that shed light in a radius.

Dancing Lights Spell (12 gp, 5 sp*): This versatile spell can create up to four lights as bright as torches or hooded lanterns. All the lights have to remain with a 10-foot radius in relation to each other, but that allows you to illuminate an area up to 80 feet across. Better yet, the lights move according to a program you set, so you can send them away from you and remain concealed in the darkness while looking into the illuminated area.

The spell has a fixed duration of one minute, so it's not very useful for exploring a dungeon, but it's more than adequate for combat.


Detect Magic Spell (12 gp, 5 sp*): An essential tool for any adventuring group, this spell is useful for assessing magical dangers (usually in the form of wards or traps) and for picking out the magical goodies in treasure hoards. It also can be used, albeit unreliably, to track down items or foes that have been rendered invisible through magic.

Light Spell (12 gp, 5 sp*): Light from this workhorse spell lasts 10 minutes per caster level, which is a little short for long term exploration but sufficient for several encounters. It sheds light in a 20-foot radius. The spell must be cast on an object (it won't work on a creature or a point of empty space). You can use it to illuminate a distant area by casting it on a projectile and firing the projectile.

Comprehend Languages Spell (25 gp*): Useful for reading unknown inscriptions when nobody in the party has the Decipher Script skill. Also useful for conversing with a creature whose language you cannot speak, although this entails some risk because you have to touch the creature.

Detect Chaos/Evil/Good/Law Spell (25 gp*): Sometimes useful for determining whether a creature poses a threat and if so how much of a threat (thanks to its ability to assess a creature's power).

Faerie Fire Spell (25 gp*): This spell affects creatures and objects, making them glow like candles. The subjects



don't shed much light (5-foot radius), but you can scatter them after the spell takes effect. The spell also is a potent counter against invisible or displaced creatures because it outlines them and negates their concealment.

Identify Spell (25 gp*): Most adventurers save this spell for use after the group leaves the dungeon with magical booty. It can be useful for learning what an item you've just found does, which may allow you to put the item to use immediately.

Everburning Torch (90 gp): This handy item can burn forever, shedding light in a 20-foot radius. You can douse the light in a container or under your clothes, and the torch burns anyplace where magic works. Because they are simply iron rods with *continual flame* spells on them, however, a *dispel magic* effect dispels them permanently.

Cost: 1 00 to 500 gp

Familiars (100 gp): Any familiar increases the master's sensory capabilities. The master gets the benefit of the Alertness feat whenever the familiar is within 5 feet, and the master can use the familiar as a scout. High-level masters can scry the familiar's location, getting a firsthand look at the locale without actually being there.

For dungeon delving, a bat familiar is hard to beat. The bat can fly and it has blindsight with a 120-foot range, which allows it to "see" through darkness, smoke, or fog. The bat can even "see" invisible things.

It pays to keep a few of the bat's (or any familiar's) limitations in mind, though. First, there's always a chance that the familiar will be spotted or ambushed when scouting ahead. Familiars are particularly vulnerable to area effects when acting alone.

Second, the master does not share senses with the familiar, but can only relay what it knows. Familiars also tend to think and speak from an animal's point of view, so their reports can be somewhat misleading. For example, a bat's blindsight reveals invisible creatures, but to the bat such creatures don't look any different from visible creatures.

Augury Spell (150 gp*): Whenever you find yourself guessing about the proper course of action, you can use this spell to check your guess. (Is it a good idea to pull this lever now?)

Continual Flame Spell (150 gp*): See the notes on the *everburning torch*.

Darkvision Spell (150 gp*): This spell provides no illumination, but allows you to see 60 feet in the dark without a light source to call attention to yourself.

Detect Thoughts Spell (150 gp*): Most people save this spell for prying information out of prisoners, but it's also useful for detecting unseen foes (provided they have Intelligence scores) and determining their numbers and intent.

Daylight Spell (150 gp*): This spell illuminates a 60-foot radius, making it as bright as day. The light is bright enough to discomfit dungeon dwellers that don't like light. Like the *light* spell, it works only on objects. You can light up even the largest dungeon chambers by placing this spell on a projectile and shooting into the center.

Find traps Spell (150 gp*): This spell can give you a chance to locate traps when you don't have a rogue in your group. It isn't very effective unless the caster has a decent Search skill, however.

Locate Object Spell (150 gp*): An often overlooked spell, *locate object* can be a real lifesaver. If you're seeking a specific treasure, this spell can point you toward it. You also can use the spell for getting your bearings when you've become lost or separated from your party. For example, you can use it to locate a staircase leading up. The spell can't locate your companions, but it can locate the equipment they're carrying. You can make this property of the spell even more useful by making sure everyone in your group contains a unique item the spell can locate.

See Invisibility Spell (150 gp*): This spell is the essential tool for dealing with invisible and ethereal foes.

Speak with Animals Spell (150 gp*): A *speak with animals* spell is useful whenever you encounter dungeondwelling animals, such as rats or bats. You can ask these creatures about the area. Most animals don't quite experience things the way adventurers do, so it's best to take their reports with a grain of salt. For example, is the "nice old man" who lives in the next chamber a harmless eccentric or a vampire?

Speak with Dead Spell (150 gp*): This spell proves useful when you encounter the remains of adventurers who were less fortunate or less prepared than you. The spell won't do any good unless the corpse you're interrogating still has an intact head.

Tongues Spell (150 gp*): Similar to the *comprehend languages* spell, *tongues* is safer when you want to speak with a creature you've just met, because it doesn't require you touch the creature. Unlike *comprehend languages*, *tongues* doesn't help you read writings.

Darkvision Potion (300 gp): This item works just like the *darkvision* spell, but it comes in potion form for nonspellcasters.

Clairvoyance/Clairaudience Spell (375 gp*): It's very useful to get a look or a listen behind a door or other closure without actually opening it or touching it. You can also use this spell to keep watch over some locale you've visited already. (Have any guards awakened in that barracks you tiptoed through?)

Scrying Spell (375 gp*): With its one-hour casting time, this spell isn't very practical for dungeon delving. It's useful, however, for getting a peek at some creature you've met before or have heard about in passing. (Is the dragon at home today?)

Wand of Light (375 gp): A fully charged wand contains 50 *light* spells, a real bargain. A great deal for bards or sorcerers who don't have the *light* spell in their personal repertoires, and a good buy for clerics and wizards who'd like to preserve their 0-level spell slots for other spells.

Cost: Above 500 gp

Locate Creature Spell (700 gp*): Useful for tracking down an opponent who has eluded you or for finding a lost companion.

True Seeing Spell (1,375 gp*): This spell allows you to see up to 120 feet through any sort of darkness, even magical darkness. It has a fairly short duration (1 minute per level), but confers many other benefits: It reveals invisible creatures, allows you to recognize illusions, and shows transmuted things in their true guises. If you're ever in doubt about exactly what you're facing, *true seeing* is the surest way to discover the facts.

Light Generating Weapons (2,000+ gp): According to the *DUNGEON MASTER's Guide*, 30% of all the magical weapons you find in treasure hoards shed light. If you make a magic weapon yourself, you can add this feature at no cost, provided you know the *light* spell. The weapon continually sheds light in a 20-foot radius. You can douse the light by sheathing or covering the weapon.

Goggles of Night (8,000 gp): These glasses give the wearer darkvision (range 60 feet) when worn, see the notes on the *darkvision* spell.

Belt of Dwarvenkind (14,900 gp): The wearer gains darkvision (range 60 feet) and several other useful abilities, namely the stonecunning ability (see the description of the dwarven race in the *Player's Handbook* or *MONSTER MANUAL*[®]). Because most dungeons are made of stone, this item is well worth the price, especially if your party lacks a dwarf character.

Gem of Brightness (15,200 gp): The gem's wielder can produce pale light in a cone 10 feet long without expending any charges (if you have low-light vision, treat the cone as though it were twice as large). The gem also can produce other light-based effects useful in combat, see the item description in the *DUNGEON MASTER's Guide*.

Gem of Seeing (75,000 gp): This item allows you to see as though using a *true seeing* spell, see the notes on that spell.

Robe of Eyes (90,000 gp): The robe's wearer gains darkvision (range 120 feet) and several other powers, including a big bonus to Spot and Search checks and the ability to see invisible and ethereal things. The item also carries some risks; see its description in the *DUNGEON MASTER's Guide*.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

A senior roleplaying game designer at Wizards of the Coast, Skip Williams is a game industry veteran who started behind the cash register at TSR's Dungeon Hobby Shop in 1976. He was part of the team that created the newest edition of the D&D game, was the primary author of the new *MONSTER MANUAL*, coauthor of the new *FORGOTTEN REALMS*[®] *Campaign Setting*, and is *DRAGON*[®] Magazine's Sage.

Skip is fond of old movies, old airplanes, and old books, but not necessarily in that order. He and his wife Penny live in the Puget Sound area with their Siamese cat and several birds.