

# MONSTERS' GUIDE TO COMBAT ENCOUNTERS

---

*For Dungeon of the Mad Mage  
Level 11: Troglodyte Warrens*

by Ruslan Kim



DUNGEONS & DRAGONS, D&D, Wizards of the Coast, Forgotten Realms, Ravenloft, Eberron, the dragon ampersand, Ravnica and all other Wizards of the Coast product names, and their respective logos are trademarks of Wizards of the Coast in the USA and other countries. This work contains material that is copyright Wizards of the Coast and/or other authors. Such material is used with permission under the Community Content Agreement for Dungeon Masters Guild. All other original material in this work is copyright 2019 by Ruslan Kim and published under the Community Content Agreement for Dungeon Masters Guild.

## About this Guide

---

Combat is one of three main pillars of the game, apart from exploration and interaction. And it takes a lot of time to prepare and run good combat encounter. The goal of this guide is to help DMs who are running Waterdeep: Dungeon of the Mad Mage adventure to get better understanding how to run combat encounters, how to make them coherent, memorable and fun!

Preparation process divided into 3 steps:

1. Determining Encounter Difficulty.
2. Determining Surprise.
3. Determining Creatures' Tactics.

First step will give you general understanding about how difficult combat encounter could be for your player characters. Each level of WDMM is designed for PCs of particular level. I use a guideline from Encounter Building section in Xanathar's Guide to Everything (XGE, p. 88) to evaluate how many PCs of corresponding level should be in the party to overcome the encounter. Math is simple. If you have the same number of PCs – it is good fight. If you have more PCs (2/3 of number of PCs is needed) – they will pass it with ease, but it still be challenging. If you have less PCs (3/2 of number of PCs is needed) – encounter will be hard, but still winnable. Also, I put notes about combat difficulty, which I think is important. Depending on this information you can adjust the encounter for your group, skip it entirely or think about possible defeat consequences.

Second step is always up to DM, so you should be prepared in advance. General guidance is written in Player's Handbook (PHB, p. 189). Basically, you should determine who is surprised when the first round of combat begins. To do so, you should know answers for these questions:

Are creatures trying to hide? They roll Stealth.

Are they successful? Compare results to PC's Passive Perception score.

Are PCs trying to hide? They roll Stealth.

Are they successful? Compare results to creatures' Passive Perception score.

Based on the results you will understand who will take actions in the first round of combat and who will not. I also put my notes for the encounters when circumstances may differ from the standard procedure.

Third step will help you to understand how to use creatures in combat. Where should they stand? What course of action will be most efficient and logical depending on the lore? Who do they need to attack? Will they fight to the death? Will they flee or surrender? I also put more detailed explanation on how some creature's abilities and traits work.

## Abbreviations and Font Styles

The following abbreviations are used throughout this guide:

PHB = Player's Handbook

MM = Monster Manual

DMG = Dungeon Master's Guide

SCAG = Sword Coast Adventurer's Guide

XGE = Xanathar's Guide to Everything

VGTM = Volo's Guide to Monsters

MTOF = Mordenkainen's Tome of Foes

WDMM = Waterdeep: Dungeon of the Mad Mage

WDH = Waterdeep: Dragon Heist

PC(s) = Player Character(s)

AC = Armor Class

DC = Difficulty Class

CR = Challenge Rating

hp = hit points

gp = gold piece(s)

AoE = Area of Effect

RAW = Rules as Written

The following font styles are used throughout this guide:

**Bold** style is used for the creature's names

*Italic* style is used for the Spells.

***Bold Italic*** style is used for the Abilities and Traits.

## Level 11: Troglodyte Warrens

---

This level is designed for four 11<sup>th</sup> level PCs. If you have more than 4 PCs, you can add more creatures or maximize their hp to make combat encounters more challenging. If you have less PCs, then you can decrease the number of creatures in combat or use less optimal tactics. All creatures in Encounter Difficulty section are compared to 11<sup>th</sup> level PCs.

### Area 1

---

#### Encounter Difficulty

1 **Drow Elite Warrior** (CR 5, MM, p. 126) = 2 PCs  
6 **Drow** (CR 1/4, MM, p. 126) = 1 PC

#### Surprise

Follow the standard procedure to determine surprise.

#### Creatures' Tactics

According to MM and MTOF, drow are selfish, cruel and treacherous creatures, who believe in their supremacy over all other. They especially hate surface elves, so you can focus on elf or half-elf PCs in combat. Drow can negotiate, flee, surrender or take captives.

The **Drow Elite Warrior** is dangerous opponent. Don't waste her action of *Faerie Fire*, let regular **Drow** cast this spell. Use **Multiattack** against less-armored PC, or PC under effect of *Faerie Fire*. All drow should be aware of dwarven resistance to poison and can avoid attacking them. If there is a chance, attack Unconscious PC to Crit him or her (PHB, p. 291).

Make one or two **Drow** cast *Faerie Fire* on several PCs to grant Advantage to other allies. Use **Hand Crossbow** attacks until PCs engage in melee. Switch to **Shortsword** to fight in melee or attack Unconscious PC to Crit him or her (PHB, p. 291).

## Area 2a

---

#### Encounter Difficulty

22 **Troglodytes** (CR 1/4, MM, p. 290) = 2 PCs

#### Surprise

Follow the standard procedure to determine surprise.

#### Creatures' Tactics

Troglodytes are savage and degenerate creatures. They can communicate in their own language, so PCs under effect of *Tongues* spell or some other magic can try to negotiate. Troglodytes can flee, surrender or take captives.

When PC starts turn next to the **Troglodyte**, he or she must make Constitution save or become poisoned. Make the **Troglodytes** use **Multiattack** against less-armored PCs.

## Area 2c

---

#### Encounter Difficulty

1 **Drow Mage** (CR 7, MM, p. 126) = 2 PCs  
5 **Drow Elite Warriors** (CR 5, MM, p. 126) = 10 PCs

#### Surprise

Follow the standard procedure to determine surprise.

#### Creatures' Tactics

See [Area 1](#) for general description of drow and tactics of the **Drow Elite Warriors**.

Assume that the **Drow Mage** pre-casted *Mage Armor*. At the beginning of the fight make the **Drow Mage** to cast *Greater Invisibility*. It requires keeping concentration which means the **Drow Mage** won't be able to use *Cloudkill* or *Evard's Black Tentacles*. On the next turns make it cast *Lightning Bolts* using 5<sup>th</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> level spell slots targeting as many PCs as possible. Don't forget to use *Shield* against attacks.

## Area 3

---

### Encounter Difficulty

1 **Troll** (CR 5, MM, p. 291) = 2 PCs

**Note.** This creature is not going to attack the party without reason.

### Surprise

Follow the standard procedure to determine surprise. Note that **Keen Smell** trait gives +5 to the **Troll's** Passive Perception score (see Passive Checks, PHB, p. 175).

### Creatures' Tactics

Trolls eat anything they can catch and devour. It is up to DM if troll will negotiate, flee or surrender.

Make the **Troll** use **Multiattack** against less armored PC, ignoring any opportunity attacks. While **Regeneration** trait is active, **Troll** have no reason to worry about damage taken. PCs will not be able to kill the **Troll** without fire or acid damage source and the **Troll** knows this. If the **Troll** takes acid or fire damage from any PC make it focus on him or her.

## Area 5

---

### Encounter Difficulty

1 **Five-Armed Troll** (CR 6 or 8, MM, p. 291, with changes) = 2 or 3 PCs

### Surprise

This creature is fighting troglodytes already, so there is no chance for surprise.

### Creatures' Tactics

See [Area 3](#).

## Area 6

---

### Encounter Difficulty

26 **Piercers** (CR 1/2, MM, p. 252) = 3 PCs

### Surprise

Thanks to **False Appearance** the **Piercers** can surprise PCs automatically, and PCs can't surprise them.

### Creatures' Tactics

A piercer is a larval form of roper. Piercers can't communicate, surrender or take captives and they flee after unsuccessful attack.

The **Piercers** falling down on PCs directly underneath their hiding place. It is up to DM which PC is standing under each **Piercer**. You can roll a die to randomly determine the target. For example, if you have 4 PCs you can roll d6. If the result is 1-4 **Piercer** attacks one of the party member. On 5-6 it drops nearby.

## Area 7a

---

### Encounter Difficulty

18 **Troglodytes** (CR 1/4, MM, p. 290) = 2 PCs

**Note.** These creatures are not going to attack the party without reason.

### Surprise

Follow the standard procedure to determine surprise.

### Creatures' Tactics

See [Area 2a](#).

## Area 7c

---

### Encounter Difficulty

4 **Troglodytes** (CR 1/4, MM, p. 290) = 1 PC

### Surprise

Follow the standard procedure to determine surprise.

### Creatures' Tactics

See [Area 2a](#).

## Area 7d

---

### Encounter Difficulty

1 **Troglodyte** (CR 1/4, MM, p. 290) = 1 PC  
6 **Giant Fire Beetles** (CR 0, MM, p. 325) = 1 PC

### Surprise

Follow the standard procedure to determine surprise.

### Creatures' Tactics

Giant fire beetles are beasts, so they can communicate with PC under effect of *Speak with Animals* spell or similar ability. They won't surrender or take captives, but they can flee.

See [Area 2a](#) for **Troglodyte's** tactics.

Make the **Giant Fire Beetles** use *Bite* against nearest PC.

## Area 8

---

### Encounter Difficulty

1 **Drow Mage** (CR 7, MM, p. 126) = 2 PCs

### Surprise

Follow the standard procedure to determine surprise.

### Creatures' Tactics

See [Area 2c](#).

## Area 8b

---

### Encounter Difficulty

9 **Zombies** (CR 1/4, MM, p. 315) = 1 PC

### Surprise

Follow the standard procedure to determine surprise.

### Creatures' Tactics

Zombies are mindless servants. They won't communicate, flee, surrender or take captives.

Make the **Zombie** use *Slam* against nearest PCs. Roll a die, if several PCs are within same reach, to determine random target. If you want to try kind of cinematic approach, you can make all **Zombies** focus on nearest PC and Shove and Grapple (PHB, p. 195) him or her in order to get Advantage and disallow movement and standing up.

## Area 9a

---

### Encounter Difficulty

1 **Invisible Troll** (CR 5, MM, p. 291, with changes) = 2 PCs  
2 **Drow Elite Warriors** (CR 5, MM, p. 126) = 4 PCs

### Surprise

Follow the standard procedure to determine surprise. Note that *Keen Smell* trait gives +5 to the **Troll's** Passive Perception score.

### Creatures' Tactics

See [Area 3](#) for the **Invisible Troll's** tactics. Invisible condition grants Advantage to the **Trolls'** attack rolls and Disadvantage to attack rolls against it (PHB, p. 292).

See [Area 1](#) for general description of drow and tactics of the **Drow Elite Warriors**. There is no ordinary **Drow** to cast *Faerie Fire*, so one of the **Drow Elite Warriors** can cast it if it can target several PCs at once.

## Area 9b

---

### Encounter Difficulty

4 **Shadow Demons** (CR 4, MM, p. 50) = 4 PCs

6 **Drow** (CR 1/4, MM, p. 126) = 1 PC

### Surprise

Follow the standard procedure to determine surprise.

### Creatures' Tactics

Demons are the embodiment of chaos and evil existing only to destroy. They can't truly die on the Material Plane, so they don't surrender or flee. They can communicate via **Telepathy** or in Abyssal language. They don't take captives and show no mercy to fallen enemies.

If PCs aren't using sources of bright light, make the **Shadow Demon** Hide as Bonus action using **Shadow Stealth** and then use **Claws** against less armored PC. **Incorporeal Movement** trait allows the **Shadow Demon** to hide inside the walls and under the floor between turns taking 1d10 force damage. This tactic forces the party to use Ready actions and lose benefits of Extra Attack or keep Concentration on readied spells.

See [Area 1](#) for the **Drow** tactics.

## Area 10a

---

### Encounter Difficulty

13 **Stirges** (CR 1/8, MM, p. 284) = 2 PCs

### Surprise

Follow the standard procedure to determine surprise.

### Creatures' Tactics

It is up to DM if stirges can flee. They can't take captives, communicate or surrender.

The **Stirges** have only **Blood Drain** attack and don't have enough Intelligence to use any kind of tactics, so make them focus on nearest PC.

## Area 10b

---

### Encounter Difficulty

1 **Mutated Troll** (CR 5, MM, p. 291, with changes) = 2 PCs

1 or more **Swarms of Insects** (CR 1/2, MM, p. 338) = 1 PC

### Surprise

Follow the standard procedure to determine surprise. Note that **Keen Smell** trait gives +5 to the **Troll's** Passive Perception score.

### Creatures' Tactics

See [Area 3](#) for the **Mutated Troll** tactics.

Swarms of insects can communicate with PC under effect of *Speak with Animals* spell or similar ability. Insects can't surrender or take captives, but they can flee.

Make the **Swarm of Insects** use **Bite** against nearest PC.

## Area 12

---

### Encounter Difficulty

1 **Drow Mage** (CR 7, MM, p. 126) = 2 PCs

2 **Chasmes** (CR 6, MM, p. 50) = 4 PCs

9 **Drow** (CR 1/4, MM, p. 126) = 1 PC

### Surprise

These creatures are fighting already, so there is no chance for surprise.

### Creatures' Tactics

See [Area 2c](#) for the **Drow Mage's** tactics and [Area 1](#) for the **Drow** tactics.

See [Area 9b](#) for general description of demons. The **Chasmes** can fly, so make them use hit and run tactics. Make it use **Proboscis** against less armored or Unconscious PC and then fly away out of melee reach. If PC starts turn within 30 ft. of **Chasme**, he or she must succeed on Constitution save or fall Unconscious (PHB, p. 292).

## Area 12

---

### Encounter Difficulty

1 **Drow Priestess of Lolth** (CR 8, MM, p. 126) = 3 PCs

1 **Hezrou** (CR 8, MM, p. 50) = 3 PCs

15 **Drow** (CR 1/4, MM, p. 126) = 2 PCs

### Surprise

These creatures are fighting already, so there is no chance for surprise.

### Creatures' Tactics

Make the **Drow Priestess** cast *Insect Plague* targeting as many PCs as possible. After that, use *Scourge* or heal allies casting *Mass Cure Wounds* or *Cure Wounds* if necessary.

See [Area 9b](#) for general description of demons. Any PC who starts turn within 10 ft. of the **Hezrou** and isn't immune to *Stench* yet must make DC 14 Constitution save or become Poisoned (PHB, p. 292). **Hezrou** is not very intelligent so you can make it focus on nearest PC.

See [Area 1](#) for the **Drow** tactics.

## Area 14

---

### Encounter Difficulty

2 **Drow Elite Warriors** (CR 5, MM, p. 126) = 4 PCs

2 **Giant Lizards** (CR 1/4, MM, p. 326, with changes) = 1 PC

### Surprise

Follow the standard procedure to determine surprise.

### Creatures' Tactics

See [Area 1](#) for the **Drow Elite Warriors'** tactics.

Giant lizards are used as mounts and pack animals by drow. They are beasts, so they can communicate with PC under effect of *Speak with*

*Animals* spell or similar ability. They won't surrender or take captives, but they can flee.

If you decide that the **Giant Lizards** must fight, for example in self-defense, make them use *Bite* against nearest PC. If you are going to use them as mounts for the **Drow**, take a look to Mounted Combat rules (PHB, p. 198). *Spider Climb* trait allows the **Giant Lizards** to flee climbing on the wall or ceiling.

## Area 15b

---

### Encounter Difficulty

1 **Mutated Troll** (CR 5, MM, p. 291, with changes) = 2 PCs

### Surprise

Follow the standard procedure to determine surprise. Note that *Keen Smell* trait gives +5 to the **Troll's** Passive Perception score.

### Creatures' Tactics

See [Area 3](#).

## Area 17c

---

### Encounter Difficulty

1 **Behir** (CR 11, MM, p. 25, with changes) = 3 PCs

### Surprise

Follow the standard procedure to determine surprise.

### Creatures' Tactics

Storm giants created the first behirs as weapons against the dragons, and behirs retain a natural hatred for dragonkind. You can make the behir focus on Dragonborn PC. Behirs are intelligent enough to communicate and flee, but they won't surrender or take captives.

This **Behir** can use Legendary Actions, so even if it lost Initiative to any PC, make it use *Greater Magic* to cast *Invisibility* right after first PC ends his or her turn. This spell will protect the **Behir**

from spells that require seeing the target and give Disadvantage to attack rolls against it. The **Behir** has +4 bonus to Constitution saves, so it has a good chance to keep Concentration. Cast it again if needed once the **Behir** regains spent Legendary Actions. On the first turn make the **Behir** use ***Lightning Breath*** targeting as many PCs as possible. Repeat every time it recharges. If ***Lightning Breath*** isn't available, make the **Behir** use ***Multiattack*** or ***Swallow*** against less armored PC. Cast ***Misty Step*** as ***Legendary Action*** to leave AoE that restricts movement of deals damage.