

# MONSTERS' GUIDE TO COMBAT ENCOUNTERS

*For Dungeon of the Mad Mage  
Level 17: Seadeeps*

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## About this Guide

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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 on 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 might 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.

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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 creatures' names

*Italic* style is used for the Spells.

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

## Level 17: Seadeeps

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This level is designed for four 14<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, you can decrease the number of creatures in combat or use less optimal tactics. All creatures in Encounter Difficulty section are compared to 14<sup>th</sup> level PCs.

### Area 4

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#### Encounter Difficulty

9 **Flumphs** (CR 1/8, MM, p. 135) = 1 PC

**Note.** These creatures fight only in self-defense. This is very easy encounter for 14<sup>th</sup> level party, so you can skip it.

#### Surprise

Follow the standard procedure to determine surprise. Thanks to **Advanced Telepathy** the **Flumphs** can't be surprised by creatures with any kind of **Telepathy**.

#### Creatures' Tactics

Flumphs are mysterious Underdark creatures which feed by siphoning mental energy from psionic creatures. They aren't evil and can communicate, flee, surrender or take captives.

The **Flumph** can fly so make it stay in the air out of melee reach between its turns. Make the **Flumph** use **Stench Spray** targeting as many PCs as possible. After that use **Tendrils** against less armored PC.

### Area 6a

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#### Encounter Difficulty

4 **Githyanki Warriors** (CR 3, MM, p. 158) = 2 PCs

#### Surprise

Follow the standard procedure to determine surprise.

#### Creatures' Tactics

Githyanki are a psionically gifted race of conquerors and raiders living in timeless Astral Sea (PHB, p. 300). They are intelligent creatures, so they can communicate in Gith language, flee, surrender or take captives. They hate mind flayers and githzerai, so you can make the githyanki focus on them if any are in the party.

Make the **Githyanki Warriors** use **Multiattack** against less armored PC. You can make them cast **Misty Step** as Bonus action to reach the target or avoid opportunity attacks.

### Area 7a

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#### Encounter Difficulty

4 **Githyanki Warriors** (CR 3, MM, p. 158) = 2 PCs

**Note.** Fight in this area alerts creatures from [Area 7b](#) and [Area 7c](#).

#### Surprise

Follow the standard procedure to determine surprise.

#### Creatures' Tactics

See [Area 6a](#).

### Area 7b

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#### Encounter Difficulty

4 **Githyanki Warriors** (CR 3, MM, p. 158) = 2 PCs

#### Surprise

Follow the standard procedure to determine surprise.

#### Creatures' Tactics

See [Area 6a](#).

## Area 7c

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### Encounter Difficulty

2 **Githyanki Knights** (CR 8, MM, p. 158) = 4 PCs

### Surprise

Follow the standard procedure to determine surprise.

### Creatures' Tactics

Make the **Githyanki Knight** cast *Telekinesis* targeting less armored PC to grant Advantage to its allies' attacks against him or her. Gith racial spells don't require any components which makes them impossible to *Counterspell*. Once *Telekinesis* is ended or not needed, make the **Githyanki Knight** use *Multiattack* against less armored or Restrained PC casting *Misty Step* if needed before or after.

## Area 8a

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### Encounter Difficulty

1 **Neothelid** (CR 13, WDM, p. 315) = 5 PCs

**Note.** The **Ulitharid** from [Area 12g](#) can't sense the **Neothelid**, because it has less than 4 Intelligence. In cas the Ulitharid can sense PCs it can send reinforcements here anytime you want.

### Surprise

PCs without *Mind Blank* or *Nondetection* spells cast on them can't surprise the **Neothelid** because of its **Creature Sense** trait. Follow the standard procedure to determine if it can surprise PCs.

### Creatures' Tactics

Neothelids are fearful abominations driven by hunger for creatures' brain. It can't communicate, flee, surrender, take captives or use advanced tactics.

Make the **Neothelid** cast *Confusion* targeting as many PCs as possible. Note, that its spells require no components, so PCs won't be able to cast *Counterspell*. Next round make the **Neothelid** cast

*Feeblemind* targeting nearest PC with lesser Intelligence score within range. Thanks to **Creature Sense** trait the **Neothelid** knows each creature's Intelligence score. Next rounds make the **Neothelid** use *Acid Breath* if it can target 2 or more PCs. Otherwise, make it use **Tentacles** against nearest PC.

## Area 9

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### Encounter Difficulty

2 **Mind Flayers** (CR 7, MM, p. 221) = 4 PCs

8 **Orogs** (CR 2, MM, p. 244) = 2 PCs

**Note.** The **Ulitharid** from [Area 12g](#) is able to sense all creatures with Intelligence score 4 or higher within 2 miles and communicate with them, so it can warn these creatures and send reinforcements anytime you want.

### Surprise

Follow the standard procedure to determine surprise.

### Creatures' Tactics

Mind flayers are psionic tyrants and slavers who devour brains of intelligent creatures. They can negotiate, flee, surrender or take captives.

The **Mind Flayers** can cast *Levitate* before the combat to stay out of melee reach. **Mind Blast** is a good start, because it damages and disables PCs within good AoE. On the next round make the **Mind Flayer** cast *Dominant Monster*, but don't forget that this will break Concentration on *Levitate*. The **Mind Flayer** is smart enough to use this spell against martial PC, rather than spellcaster. If **Mind Blast** is not available, the **Mind Flayer** can attack in melee focusing on less armored or Stunned PC. **Tentacles** and **Extract Brain** attacks work in conjunction. Successful **Tentacles** attack inflicts Grappled condition automatically and if PC fails saving throw it also inflicts Stunned condition. Stunned condition includes Incapacitated condition which allows the **Mind Flayer** use **Extract Brain** on the next round.

Orogs are orcs blessed with a surprisingly keen intellect that ordinary orcs believe is a gift from the orc goddess Luthic. These orogs are thralls under the illithids' command and defend their alien masters to the death. According to VGTM (See VGTM, p. 75), a thrall can be restored to its former self through a combination of spells and ministrations. The thrall must have *Regenerate*, *Heal* and *Greater Restoration* cast on it once per day for three consecutive days. The victim is restored to normal when the final round of spells is cast.

Make the **Orogs** use *Multiattack* against less armored or Stunned PC. The **Orog** can use *Aggressive* trait as Bonus Action to reach its target when needed. Make the **Orog** use *Javelin* only if there is no chance to attack in melee.

## Area 10

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### Encounter Difficulty

1 **Intellect Devourer** (CR 2, MM, p. 167) = 1 PC

*Note.* The **Ulitharid** from [Area 12g](#) is able to sense all creatures with Intelligence score 4 or higher within 2 miles and communicate with them, so it can send reinforcements here.

### Surprise

It is impossible for PCs to surprise the **Intellect Devourer** because of its *Detect Sentience* trait. Follow the standard procedure to determine if it can surprise PCs. As a DM you can make party surprised when the **Intellect Devourer** willingly leaves its host.

### Creatures' Tactics

There is not so much information about intellect devourer's behavior from the lore point of view. Apart of Monster Manual, you can find some additional information about this creature in published books (WDH, p. 212 and VGTM, p. 77) but there are no clues on how it behaves. Intellect devourers have alien intelligence, but they can communicate using *Telepathy*, so it is up to DM if they will negotiate, flee, surrender or take captives.

While inside the **Grimlock**, the **Intellect Devourer** can't use its own attacks. It can leave the **Grimlock** anytime and it teleports outside once the host is dead. **Intellect Devourer's Multiattack** includes *Devour Intellect* action. *Devour Intellect* can inflict Stunned condition (PHB, p. 292), which can be ended by *Greater Restoration* spell. Stunned condition includes Incapacitated condition and allows the **Intellect Devourer** to use *Body Theft* next round. If PC dies because of *Body Thief* ability, *Revivify* and even *Raise Dead* spells will not work, since they don't restore any missing body parts. The easiest way to bring PC back to life is *Resurrection* spell.

## Area 12f

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### Encounter Difficulty

2 **Mind Flayers** (CR 7, MM, p. 221) = 4 PCs

*Note.* The **Ulitharid** from [Area 12g](#) is able to sense all creatures with Intelligence score 4 or higher within 2 miles and communicate with them, so it can warn these creatures and send reinforcements anytime you want.

### Surprise

Follow the standard procedure to determine surprise.

### Creatures' Tactics

See [Area 9](#).

## Area 12g

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### Encounter Difficulty

1 **Ulitharid** (CR 9, WDMM, p. 316) = 3 PCs

### Surprise

PCs without *Mind Blank* or *Nondetection* spells cast on them can't surprise the **Ulitharid** because of its *Creature Sense* trait. Follow the standard procedure to determine if it can surprise PCs.

## Creatures' Tactics

Ulitharid is a larger and more potent mind flayer that boasts six tentacles. It has almost genius level of intelligence and can negotiate, flee, surrender or take captives.

The **Ulitharid** has *Project Image* spell. It's not combat spell, but you can use it to communicate with PCs if you need to once they arrive on this level. Make the **Ulitharid** always have *Levitate* spell casted on it, so it will be able to stay out of melee reach if combat occurs. **Mind Blast** is the best attack the **Ulitharid** has, because it damages and disables PCs within good AoE at once, so use it every time it's available. On the next round, if **Mind Blast** didn't recharge, make the **Ulitharid** cast *Confusion* targeting as many PCs as possible, but don't forget that this will break Concentration on *Levitate*. Next round it doesn't have **Mind Blast** and Concentration on *Confusion* is broken or not needed, make the **Ulitharid** cast *Dominant Monster* on martial non-elf PC. As an alternative you can make the **Ulitharid** cast *Feeblemind* on spellcaster with low Intelligence score. Thanks to **Creature Sense** trait the **Ulitharid** knows each creature's Intelligence score. While it's not very good idea, the **Ulitharid** can fight in melee focusing on less armored or Stunned PC. **Tentacles** and **Extract Brain** attacks work in conjunction. Successful **Tentacles** attack inflicts Grappled condition automatically and if PC fails saving throw it also inflicts Stunned condition. Stunned condition includes Incapacitated condition which allows the **Ulitharid** use **Extract Brain** on the next round. Instead of fighting to the death the **Ulitharid** can cast *Mass Suggestion* and try to suggest PCs reasonable way to end violence or it can simply try to run away.

## Area 12h

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### Encounter Difficulty

4 **Ettins** (CR 4, MM, p. 167) = 3 PCs

**Note.** The **Ulitharid** from [Area 12g](#) is able to sense all creatures with Intelligence score 4 or higher within 2 miles and communicate with them, so it can warn these creatures and send reinforcements anytime you want.

## Surprise

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

## Creatures' Tactics

Orcs transformed by magic of Demogorgon became the first ettins. These ettins have had their minds broken by the mind flayers and fight to the death. According to VGTM (See VGTM, p. 75), a thrall can be restored to its former self through a combination of spells and ministrations. The thrall must have *Regenerate*, *Heal* and *Greater Restoration* cast on it once per day for three consecutive days. The victim is restored to normal when the final round of spells is cast.

Make **Ettins** use **Multiattack** against nearest PC.

## Area 14

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### Encounter Difficulty

4 **Mind Flayers** (CR 7, MM, p. 221) = 8 PCs

**Note.** The **Ulitharid** from [Area 12g](#) is able to sense all creatures with Intelligence score 4 or higher within 2 miles and communicate with them, so it can warn these creatures and send reinforcements anytime you want.

## Surprise

Follow the standard procedure to determine surprise.

## Creatures' Tactics

See [Area 9](#).

## Area 15

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### Encounter Difficulty

3 **Mind Flayers** (CR 7, MM, p. 221) = 6 PCs

**Note.** The **Ulitharid** from [Area 12g](#) is able to sense all creatures with Intelligence score 4 or higher within 2 miles and communicate with them, so it can warn these creatures and send reinforcements anytime you want.

## Surprise

Follow the standard procedure to determine surprise.

## Creatures' Tactics

See [Area 9](#).

## Area 16a

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### Encounter Difficulty

2 **Scaladar** (CR 9, MM, p. 86) = 6 PCs

**Note.** The **Ulitharid** from [Area 12g](#) is able to sense all creatures with Intelligence score 4 or higher within 2 miles and communicate with them, so it can warn these creatures and send reinforcements anytime you want.

## Surprise

Follow the standard procedure to determine surprise.

## Creatures' Tactics

These constructs have duergar's brains implanted. They understand Dwarvish and Undercommon, which means they can communicate with creatures with **Telepathy** or similar abilities. It's up to DM if they can flee, surrender or take captives.

Make the **Scaladar** use **Multiattack** against less armored PC.

## Area 16b

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### Encounter Difficulty

8 **Duergar** (CR 8, MM, p. 158) = 1 PC

**Note.** The **Ulitharid** from [Area 12g](#) is able to sense all creatures with Intelligence score 4 or higher within 2 miles and communicate with them, so it can warn these creatures and send reinforcements anytime you want.

## Surprise

Follow the standard procedure to determine surprise.

## Creatures' Tactics

Duergar are greedy race of Underdark slavers. These duergar have had their minds broken by the mind flayers and fight to the death. According to VGTM (See VGTM, p. 75), a thrall can be restored to its former self through a combination of spells and ministrations. The thrall must have **Regenerate**, **Heal** and **Greater Restoration** cast on it once per day for three consecutive days. The victim is restored to normal when the final round of spells is cast.

If there is a chance make the **Duergar** use **Enlarge** and **Invisibility** before the fight. Otherwise, make the **Duergar** use **Enlarge** at the beginning of the fight and use **Warpick** against less-armored PC next turn. Use **Javelin** only if there is no chance to use **Warpick**.

## Area 16c

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### Encounter Difficulty

2 **Mind Flayers** (CR 7, MM, p. 221) = 4 PCs

**Note.** The **Ulitharid** from [Area 12g](#) is able to sense all creatures with Intelligence score 4 or higher within 2 miles and communicate with them, so it can warn these creatures and send reinforcements anytime you want.

## Surprise

Follow the standard procedure to determine surprise.

## Creatures' Tactics

See [Area 9](#).