MONSTERS' GUIDE
TO COMBAT ENCOUNTERS

For Dungeon of the Mad Mage Level 6: Lost Level

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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 6: Lost Level

This level is designed for four 9th level PCs. If you have more than 4 PCs, you can add more creatures 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 9th level PCs.

Area 7

Encounter Difficulty
1 **Cloaker** (CR 8, MM, p. 41) = 5 PCs
4 **Duergar** (CR 1, MM, p. 122) = 1 PC

Surprise
Follow the standard procedure to determine surprise.

Creatures' Tactics
Cloakers are stealthy and patient underground predators. They can communicate and flee but won't surrender or take captives.

Duergar are greedy race of Underdark slavers. They are intelligent enough to negotiate, flee, surrender or take captives. They hate surface dwarves, so you can make them focus on such PCs. According to MTOF, duergar deity Laduguer pledged to archdevil Asmodeus alliance against drow goddess Lolth, so they can focus on drow PCs also.

The **Cloaker** has above-average Intelligence score and can use advanced tactics. In the first round of combat make it use *Phantasms*. It is very good defensive ability. Each time PC attacks the **Cloaker** or uses harmful spell against it, roll a die to determine the target. If it has 3 duplicates roll d4, if 2 – roll d6 and divide result by 2, if one – any die will work, you should only assign even or odd number for the real **Cloaker**. Note, that duplicate disappears only if it failed save against damaging spell, but not when it takes damage from the spell like *Fireball* on successful save.

After using *Phantasms* make the **Cloaker** use *Multiattack* against less-armored PC. After the first successful *Bite* attack the **Cloaker** attaches to the PC which activate *Damage Transfer* trait and grants Advantage for subsequent *Bite* attacks. Successful *Bite* attack with Advantage inflicts Blinded condition (PHB, p. 292) and PC can't breathe (PHB, p. 183). According to Jeremy Crawford's Twitter, PC can hold breath when affected by such kind of abilities, which makes them less dangerous. *Moan* doesn't look like effective attack, so it isn't recommended to use it.

Make the **Duergar** use *Enlarge* at the beginning of the fight. After that use *Warpick* against less-armored or Blinded PCs. Use *Javelin* only if there is no chance to use *Warpick*. If you decide that it is time to flee, make the **Duergar** use *Invisibility* and run away.

Area 12

Encounter Difficulty
2 **Xorn** (CR 5, MM, p. 304) = 4 PCs
5 **Duergar** (CR 1, MM, p. 122) = 2 PCs

Surprise
Follow the standard procedure to determine surprise.

Creatures' Tactics
Xorn are bizarre creatures native to Elemental Plane of Earth. They find precious metals and gems by scent and eat it. They are not inherently evil and can negotiate in Primordial (Terran), flee or surrender. Xorn are unable to consume organic material so they don't have reasons to take captives or finish off fallen PCs.

Treasure Sense allows the **Xorn** to pinpoint precious metals or gems. You can make it use *Multiattack* against PC with the largest amount of money. **Xorn's** *Earth Glide* doesn't allow it to move through worked stone. If you decide that some parts of the walls or the floor in this area are broken, the **Xorn** can borrow through unworked earth and hide there between their turns, avoiding attacks from PCs.

See for the tactics of the **Duergar**. Note, that they are already enlarged at the beginning of the combat and there is no **Cloakers** to make PCs Blinded.

Area 15a

Encounter Difficulty
2 **Cloakers** (CR 8, MM, p. 41) = 10 PCs
9 **Duergar** (CR 1, MM, p. 122) = 3 PCs
   Note. These creatures are not going to attack PCs without reason.

Surprise
Follow the standard procedure to determine surprise.

Creatures' Tactics
See .

Area 15b

Encounter Difficulty
1 **Clay Golem** (CR 9, MM, p. 167) = 6 PCs

Surprise
The **Golem** resides inside the altar impervious to any damage. There is no chance to surprise it.

Creatures' Tactics
Golems are elemental spirits bound into material form by powerful magic. They blindly obey any commands given them by their creators, don't feel pain and don't afraid of death. They won't communicate, flee, surrender or take captives.

Make the **Clay Golem** use *Haste* and attack nearest PC with *Slam* as Bonus Action. Next round it will be able to make 3 attacks with *Slam* using Action and Bonus action. At the beginning of each **Golem's** turn roll d6. If the result is 5 or 6 *Haste* is available once again. If the **Golem** goes *Berserk* and several creatures are at the same range, you can roll a die to determine random target.

Area 18

Encounter Difficulty
2 **Helmed Horrors** (CR 4, MM, p. 183) = 2 PCs
   Note. These creatures won't attack dwarves except in self-defense.

Surprise
Follow the standard procedure to determine surprise.

Creatures' Tactics
Helmed horrors are constructs with the ability to reason and adjust tactical decisions. They won't communicate, flee, surrender or take captives.

The **Helmed Horror** can fly, so make them use hit and run tactics. Use *Multiattack* against less-armored PC and stay in the air out of melee reach between attacks.

Area 22a

Encounter Difficulty
1 **Xorn** (CR 5, MM, p. 304) = 2 PCs
   Note. This creature is not going to attack PCs without reason.

Surprise
Follow the standard procedure to determine surprise.

Creatures' Tactics
See .

Area 26

Encounter Difficulty
1 **Umber Hulk** (CR 5, MM, p. 292) = 2 PCs

Surprise
Follow the standard procedure to determine surprise. **Umber Hulk's** *Tremorsense* will automatically detect non-flying PCs.

Creatures' Tactics

Umber hulks are underground ambushers with terrifying gaze. They have their own language, so PCs under effect of *Tongues* spell can communicate with them. Umber hulks can flee but won't surrender or take captives.

Confusing Gaze works this way. Each PC that starts turn within 30 ft. of the **Umber Hulk** must avert his or her eyes, which effectively inflicts Blinded condition (PHB, p. 290), or make DC 15 Charisma saving throw. Surprised PCs can't avert their eyes. On failed save PC can't take Reaction and rolls d8 to determine what to do this round. Make the **Umber Hulk** use *Multiattack* against less-armored or Blinded PC. If you decide that it is time to flee, make the **Umber Hulk** use *Tunneler* trait to burrow through the wall or floor to run away.

Area 29a

Encounter Difficulty
10 **Flying Axes** (CR 1/4, MM, p. 19) = 1 PC
   Note. This is easy encounter, so you can skip it.

Surprise
As a DM you can decide that attacking **Axes** make party surprised. It is impossible for PCs to surprise **Flying Axes**.

Creatures' Tactics
Flying axes are animated objects. They can't negotiate, flee, surrender or take captives.

Make the **Flying Axe** attack nearest PC. You can make all attack rolls for the **Flying Axes** attacking same PC at once to save some time.

Area 29d

Encounter Difficulty
1 **Glabrezu** (CR 9, MM, p. 50) = 6 PCs
1 **Hezrou** (CR 8, MM, p. 50) = 5 PCs
1 **Vrock** (CR 6, MM, p. 50) = 3 PCs
1 **Barlgura** (CR 5, MM, p. 50) = 2 PCs

Note. This is very hard encounter, especially if the **Glabrezu** will have time to release other demons while the party exploring true tomb. I'd recommend not to follow book's suggestion and make the **Glabrezu** start fight immediately after its release. In this case the **Glabrezu** will be forced to spend its attacks to crush statues and other demons will be released one after another. You can also make encounter a bit easier if you roleplay demons as they like to play with PCs, don't finish them off, giving them false hope and knocking them dying at 0 hp again and again.

Surprise
Follow the standard procedure to determine surprise.

Creatures' Tactics
According to the lore, 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.

In the first round make the **Glabrezu** attack statues to release other demons. On the next rounds make it use ***Multiattack*** option to make two ***Pincer*** attacks and cast one spell. *Confusion* is good AoE disable, *Dispel Magic* can end some powerful spells casted by PCs, and *Power Word Stun* can break Concentration, grant Advantage and completely cancel any actions of targeted PC. The **Glabrezu** is intelligent enough to understand that it is protected from magic very well, so you can make it focus on martial PCs with magic weapons. You can also make it focus on Stunned PCs.

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.

The **Vrock** can fly so make it use hit and run tactics and stay in the air out of melee reach. In the first round make it use ***Stunning Screech***

targeting as many PCs as possible. After that make it use **Multiattack** against Stunned PCs (PHB, p. 292), preferably with strong ranged attacks. You can make the **Vrock** use *Spores* to decrease combat effectiveness of martial PCs.

Don't waste the **Barlgura's** actions on spells in combat. Use *Reckless* at the start of **Barlgura's** turn and *Multiattack* nearest or less-armored PCs. Assume, that the **Barlgura** is able to distinguish plate armor from studded leather, but it is up to DM if it cares. You can make it use *Running Leap* to jump over the front-rank high-AC PCs and find more vulnerable target.

Area 32

Encounter Difficulty
1 **Gray Slaad** (CR 9, MM, p. 274) = 6 PCs
   Note. This creature is tasked to kill any adventurers on sight.

Surprise
Follow the standard procedure to determine surprise. The **Slaad** under effect of *Invisibility* spell can Hide to surprise the party.

Creatures' Tactics
Slaadi are the creatures of pure chaos native to Outer Plane, called Ever-Changing Chaos of Limbo (PHB, p. 300). According to MM, their goal is to sow discord on the Material Plane. Gray slaadi are intelligent enough to negotiate, flee, surrender or take captives.

Fear is a good spell in one vs. the party situation. The less PCs will be able to attack the **Gray Slaad,** the better. After that, make it use *Multiattack* against less-armored PC. Always use *Greatsword* instead of *Claw*. Use *Fireball,* if you can target 3 and more PCs. Use *Invisibility* or *Fly* spells, if you decide that it is time to flee. At the beginning of each turn the **Gray Slaad** regains 10 hp, if nothing like *Chill Touch* cantrip prevents its *Regeneration*.

Area 33a

Encounter Difficulty
1 **Undead Bulette** (CR 5, MM, p. 34, with changes) = 2 PCs

Surprise
Follow the standard procedure to determine surprise. **Undead Bulette's** *Tremorsense* will automatically detect non-flying PCs.

Creatures' Tactics
Undead bulette is mindless guardian. It won't negotiate, flee, surrender or take captives.

Make the **Undead Bulette** to use *Deadly Leap* if it can target 2 or more PCs. Otherwise, use *Bite* against nearest PC.

Area 34a

Encounter Difficulty
2 **Umber Hulks** (CR 5, MM, p. 292) = 4 PCs

Surprise
Follow the standard procedure to determine surprise. **Umber Hulk's** *Tremorsense* will automatically detect non-flying PCs.

Creatures' Tactics
See .

Area 36c

Encounter Difficulty
2 **Gray Slaadi** (CR 9, MM, p. 274) = 12 PCs
   Note. These creatures are tasked to kill any adventurers on sight.

Surprise
Follow the standard procedure to determine surprise. The **Slaadi** under effect of *Invisibility* spell can Hide to surprise the party.

Creatures' Tactics

See [Area 32](#).

Area 37b

Encounter Difficulty

1 **Fire Elemental** (CR 5, MM, p. 123) = 2 PCs

Surprise

Follow the standard procedure to determine surprise.

Creatures' Tactics

A fire elemental is a force of capricious devastation. It won't negotiate, flee, surrender or take captives.

Make the **Fire Elemental** to move through as many PCs' spaces as possible to set them ablaze because of *Fire Form* trait. Then, make it use *Multiattack* against nearest PC. You can roll a die if several PCs are within the same reach.

Area 40

Encounter Difficulty

2 **Duergar** (CR 1, MM, p. 122) = 1 PC
   Note. This is easy encounter, so you can skip it.

Surprise

Follow the standard procedure to determine surprise.

Creatures' Tactics

See [Area 7](#).

Area 41

Encounter Difficulty

1 **Gray Slaad** (CR 9, MM, p. 274) = 6 PCs
   Note. This creature is tasked to kill any adventurers on sight.

Surprise

Follow the standard procedure to determine surprise. The **Slaad** under effect of *Invisibility* spell can Hide to surprise the party.

Creatures' Tactics

See [Area 32](#).

Area 47a

Encounter Difficulty

2 **Invisible Stalkers** (CR 6, MM, p. 192) = 6 PCs

Surprise

Follow the standard procedure to determine surprise. The **Invisible Stalker** under effect of *Invisibility* trait can Hide to surprise the party.

Creatures' Tactics

Invisible stalkers are air elementals transformed by powerful magic to hunt creatures and retrieve objects to their summoner. They won't negotiate, flee, surrender or take captives.

The **Invisible Stalkers** can fly, so make them use hit and run tactics. While they are Invisible, they won't provoke opportunity attacks and make all attacks with Advantage. Make them use *Slam* attacks against less-armored PCs and stay in the air out of melee reach between their turns.