

Dungeon

Submission Guidelines

Your Complete Guide to D&D® Adventure Design

These guidelines are meant to assist authors who wish to submit their modules for publication in DUNGEON Magazine. Before submitting a D&D® adventure to the magazine, you are strongly encouraged to review the chapters on designing adventures in the DUNGEON MASTER's Guide. This book is invaluable and covers many of the topics mentioned only briefly herein.

If you have any questions that are not answered in these guidelines, we will respond as quickly as possible to inquiries as long as they are accompanied by a self-addressed stamped envelope (SASE). Email queries do not require an SASE. Please do not phone us with queries; we prefer to respond via mail or email.

The modules in *DUNGEON Magazine* vary from brief encounters to those about 20 magazine pages long (1,500–15,000 words).

We will not look at modules for other companies' game systems or those that have been simultaneously submitted to another gaming magazine or company. Neither will we consider non-D&D d20 adventure material. All submitted material must be your own work and cannot be copied, in whole or in part, from any published or copyrighted source.

Queries and Forms

Before you submit a module to *DUNGEON Magazine*, send us a brief proposal. Your 1–2 page double-spaced proposal should include the following elements: a working title, an original and compelling plot, the major foes, the game system and types of characters for which the module was meant, a summary of the rewards to be gained and foes to be overcome, and an estimate of the completed module's length and number of maps.

Submissions to our "Side Treks" column (modules under 2,000 words or consisting of a

single encounter) do not require a proposal but should follow all other listed module guidelines.

A copy of our Standard Disclosure Form is included with these guidelines. An electronic version is available on our website: www.wizards.com. You have our permission to make as many copies of this form as necessary. A completed form must accompany each proposal and manuscript that you submit. We will return unread all material that is not accompanied by a completed Standard Disclosure Form. Our address is:

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Proposals sent via regular mail that are not accompanied by a self-addressed stamped envelope (SASE) will not receive a response.

You must attach sufficient U.S. postage or send sufficient International Reply Coupons. (IRCs can be obtained at your local post office.) Foreign stamps cannot be used to send mail out of the United States. If we like your proposal, you'll receive a reply requesting a full adventure. We might also make suggestions to improve the adventure's chance of acceptance.

We accept proposals via email. However, a copy of the Standard Disclosure Form text (including your name and other required information) must be uploaded with each proposal.

If we request a complete manuscript, do not send it by email unless permission is expressly granted to do so. Send us the maps, manuscript, signed Standard Disclosure Form, and SASE by regular mail for evaluation.

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In addition to monetary payment, we send you at least one free copy of the issue containing your published work.

Correspondence

Always enclose a self-addressed, stamped envelope (SASE) with each proposal and submission. Include an envelope large enough to

hold your entire manuscript in case we return it for revisions or because it is unsuitable for use. Even if you keep a copy of your adventure or have your module recorded on computer disk, we prefer to return the entire manuscript, as we will note specific problem areas in the text itself. We never respond to a writer who does not enclose an SASE with his or her manuscript, and we are under no obligation to return manuscripts that arrive without SASEs.

If you wish to be notified when we receive your manuscript, enclose a self-addressed, stamped postcard or note that you wish to receive confirmation of receipt via email in a cover letter. We won't be able to inform you immediately as to the acceptability of your adventure, but the postcard or email will let you know the manuscript arrived safely.

We cannot assume responsibility for the transit and safekeeping of any modules and maps sent to us, so it is a good idea to always keep one copy of your module and maps in your possession.

Physical Quality of Modules

Modules should be sent to us in printed form, either typed or produced on a computer printer with clear, dark print; letter quality is preferred. Do not print out your module in all capital letters or use Gothic type, calligraphy script, or any other fancy lettering. In the case of computer-printed adventures, use a legible 12-point typeface. We do not accept handwritten modules. Type your name, your address, and the approximate word count on the first page. Your manuscript must be typed or printed on 8 1/2 in. × 11 inch sheets of white or quality recycled paper. (Foreign submissions may use standard A4 paper.) Do not use colored or textured paper. If you send a photocopy of your module, be sure it is on good quality paper.

Double-space your manuscript to allow room for editorial comments. Small corrections can be made on the manuscript (for example, correction of a misspelled word or insertion of a short phrase). You may paper-clip the pages of your module together, but do not use staples, plastic spines, or binders. Number each page of your manuscript.

Please keep module submissions to a maximum length of 50 double-spaced pages (15,000 words). Longer submissions are only accepted in rare cases, usually in conjunction with the release of an official D&D product. Consistently poor spelling, grammar, or sentence structure almost certainly causes a module to be rejected. We do not insist that manuscripts be perfect, but we look more favorably upon those that require less editing. Computer users, please use your spelling/grammar checkers.

Artwork and Maps

A finished module should be accompanied by all relevant maps and diagrams. Additional drawings, sketches, and charts might be added for clarification. Group all maps at the end of the module, after the last page of text.

Make sure that all artwork and maps are rendered neatly in ink. The map grid (if any) should be clearly marked without obstructing the map's legibility. Scale lines may be used for outdoor maps. Use a straight edge to draw the straight lines on your final copy. Darken solid areas (such as rock around a dungeon complex). Whenever possible, draw the furnishings or obvious features of an area. Use icons for beds, desks, ladders, trapdoors, curtains, and so forth. Try to make your icons recognizable without a map key. Refrain from painting your maps. Only use color to indicate important map features where use of plain ink does not suffice, such as to designate bodies of water, heavily forested areas bordering plains, or other such locations.

Remember internal consistency when designing maps. Inhabited areas require provisions for bringing in food, water, light and heat; a method for disposing of waste materials; and ways for the inhabitants to get around easily. Large area maps should conform to known geographical principles; note special cases. Use numerals for rooms in dungeons and other structures, numbered consecutively throughout. (Do not start over with room number 1 on a dungeon's second level.) Always check

your maps against the finished text. Make sure you have described all relevant areas on the maps and have not mislabeled anything.

Adventure Design Guide

Use these guidelines and templates when designing D&D adventures. An adventure module contains the following elements, preferably in the given order:

Introduction (Mandatory)

The introduction begins with some small bit of flavor text, a quote, or some other appropriate text. It also provides a one-to-two sentence adventure summary, as well as information on the encounter levels. Also, the introduction contains additional subsections, including the Adventure Background, Adventure Synopsis, and Character Hooks (or For the Players). This is an excellent place to provide DMs with all of the information they need to set up the adventure, including advice on what sections of the core books they might need to reread.

Include a paragraph detailing the class composition and the general level for which they have designed the adventure. Some designs might allow for some flexibility in PC levels; this section can include notes to help DMs scale the adventure for parties of varying size and level. If this section gives instructions on using the adventure for more or fewer than four PCs, or for PCs who are not of the suggested character level, remind the DM that changing the total number of monsters also changes the overall encounter level (EL) of each encounter and most likely the total number of experience points available for a given party.

Adventure Background (Mandatory)

This section provides the DM with a clear, brief summary of events leading up to the adventure, including any pertinent historical details and villainous machinations.

Adventure Synopsis (Mandatory)

This section provides a clear, concise summary of the adventure for the DM, including a "road map" or timeline that tells the DM how the adventure should play out. Outline surprises and "plot twists" here, not during the course of the adventure. Optionally, this section might also include a brief description of the adventuring environment, as well as special rules, adventure hooks, and other suggestions to "get the ball rolling."

For the Players or Character Hooks (Mandatory)

This section helps DMs lead the PCs into the actual adventure. It offers ways to inject PCs into the adventure. At least one motive should be simple and straight-forward, such as delivering a message or traveling to visit contacts in another area. Other motives can exploit alignment, class, race, and society. Hooks should not presume anything about the PCs' actions, nor should they follow the standard adventure hook that presumes they are mercenaries available to the highest bidder. Hooks that thrust the PCs into the action and/or provide them with personal motivation for pursuing the quest are greatly preferred.

Here's an adventure hook designed to lead PCs to the dungeons beneath a mountain: "A dwarf in the party is the distant relative of a renowned dwarven smith believed to have died under the mountain. Now that he has proved himself capable, his family expects him to find the smith's remains and insure that he is buried properly. The clan leader distributes a gift to each character who agrees to participate (a magic or special item worth about 1,000 gp), and dwarven characters might even be able to earn a special favor upon completion of the quest." Even if the DM does not use the more specific alternative motives, they still serve the purpose of showing the DM how to use character and world details to create plot hooks.

This section can also contain rumors and background information for players. Other potential elements include town statistics, time of year,

and other relevant bits. If you include information and rumors, include information that a bard might know thanks to bardic knowledge, rumors that characters can gain by using the Gather Information skill, things that characters might know based on Knowledge checks, and (at higher levels) knowledge that spellcasters might gain through divinations.

The Adventure's Encounters (Mandatory)

The adventure itself consists of a series of planned encounters keyed to a map or timeline. Each encounter can include any or all of the following sections: Read-aloud Text, General Description, Trap(s), Treasure, Creature(s), Tactics, and Development. Do not include sections that are unnecessary for a given encounter. For instance, an area devoid of traps does not require a trap section.

Each encounter should be rated with an Encounter Level (EL #) in the main encounter header, allowing the DM to quickly assess the possible threat to his or her PCs. The EL is the properly calculated CRs of all creatures and traps in a particular encounter (for instructions on how to calculate EL from many CRs, see page 101 of the *DUNGEON MASTER's Guide*). For example, an encounter header could appear thus:

23. Vampire's Den (EL 13) In the case where an EL is calculated solely from the CR of a particularly weak creature, such as a kobold, recording the EL as a fraction (such as 1/4) is acceptable.

Note: Certain encounters are structured so that the threats are not felt simultaneously. It's one thing if the pit trap is in the center of the room and the monster uses it to its advantage in a fight—calculating the total EL by using the CRs of the monster and trap is expected. But if the trap is on a chest hidden in a closet and will never make itself felt during a fight, reasonably that trap's CR should not be figured into the EL. Likewise, if an encounter is designed such that NPCs initially encountered appear friendly, but on a repeat visit are revealed for a threat, the EL in the encounter main header should not give the EL, based on the second visit, because it is not true for the first visit to the encounter.

The answer is simple. In one of these situations, append the EL tag in the main header as normal, but instead of a value, use "variable." Then, in the subheads describing the special situation (that is, Traps, Development), put the actual EL of the special situation.

Dungeon Features (Mandatory)

Some dungeons have features that are common throughout. For instance, how high are the ceilings? How are rooms illuminated? What types of doors are prevalent? (This includes such information as thickness of door and material doors are composed of, which has rule-specific implications for hit points and hardness.) What about wandering monsters? Rather than repeat this information throughout the adventure, keep the information in one section. Once optional, this is now standard information you are expected to include, since it is often very relevant to the course of the adventure.

Read-Aloud Text (Optional, but Preferred)

Set off in a shaded box, this section generally precedes the other entries of an encounter, although text might precede it if important to the encounter. The read-aloud text (otherwise known as boxed text) should be read or paraphrased aloud to the players at an opportune time. It also provides the DM with a description of items in the room. Read-aloud text provides a bare-bones description of the encounter area; it does not make any reference to the viewer. Avoid phrases such as "you see," "as you enter the room," or other phrases that assume any action whatsoever on the players' parts.

General Description (Mandatory)

This section provides the DM with information on interesting features, creatures, traps, and other specifics of the encounter that play off the read-aloud text. This information immediately follows the read-aloud

text and is not set off in any special way. Simple encounters can get by with just the general description. However, a particularly complex encounter might require more structure.

Trap(s) (Optional)

The Trap section describes in detail any traps (magic or mundane) that PCs might trigger in the encounter.

Creature(s) (Optional)

Any creature the PCs might encounter is described here. This section provides a physical description of the monster or NPC, as well as general motivations and background.

Include the creature's abbreviated statistics if the creature appears in the adventure almost exactly as it does in the *Monster Manual*. In that case, include only the number of creatures appearing, hit points, and special equipment is provided in the abbreviated stat block, as well as a *Monster Manual* page number for easy reference. Full statistics for creatures should only be included if the creature is significantly non-standard from the way it appears in the *Monster Manual*. See "D&D Specific Formats," below, for the proper way to format creature statistics. (New magic items, spells, and other items should also be fully described where the creature is initially encountered.)

Note: Refer to the *DUNGEON MASTER's Guide*, Chapter 4, Challenge Ratings (CRs) and Encounter Levels (ELs) for a general grounding in understanding how to calculate Challenge Ratings and Encounter Levels for a mixed group of monsters or monsters of varying levels.

Tactics (Optional)

If the actions or tactics of the creatures are too complex to handily fit into the general description, they can be described in this section.

Treasure (Optional)

Any treasure that the PCs can find during the encounter is described here, above and beyond possessions noted in the monster statistics, if any. Special items, such as new magic items, should be listed here; however, the full presentation of a new magic item or other special item should go into a sidebar.

It is important that total treasure for an adventure of a given level reflect the information in the *DUNGEON MASTER's Guide* beginning on page 170. Consult Tables 7–2 to 7–4 when building a treasure for your adventure encounters!

Avoid petty treasures, such as "2d6 sp" and other pocket change. Keeping track of miniscule amounts of treasure isn't worth the time and effort and only slows down the game. Give individual creatures worthwhile treasures or nothing.

Development (Optional)

Sometimes the PCs' actions can have unusual ramifications or affect later encounters. These changes and developments should be described here.

Ad Hoc XP Adjustment (Optional)

As per page 167 of the *DUNGEON MASTER's Guide*, certain encounters can place the monstrous adversaries in a tactical advantage. In extreme cases, you may judge that the player characters deserve extra XP for overcoming a situation stacked against them. On the other hand, some monster encounters may place the monsters at a marked disadvantage, in which case the PCs may deserve less XP than the CR otherwise indicates. Use this subhead in your encounter to note the XP adjustment for the encounter, and a brief reason for the adjustment.

Special Note: Creatures and traps that pose a threat to the PCs have a Challenge Rating (CR). The rules for determining Challenge Ratings for NPCs and traps are in the *DUNGEON MASTER's Guide*; monster Challenge Ratings are in the *Monster Manual*.

Concluding the Adventure (Mandatory)

Describing the possible consequences resulting from the adventure's success or failure, including rewards, punishments, and spin-off adventures for later gaming sessions. Some of the consequences should be roleplayed to provide a sense of closure. If the PCs succeeded at their task, the DM should have the tools necessary to help the players feel that they have accomplished something. It never hurts to provide read-aloud text to get the ending scene started.

Appendix (Optional)

An appendix (if required) should appear at the end of your manuscript, and it might encapsulate any of the following: random encounter tables, rumor tables, new magic item descriptions, new spell descriptions, and new monster descriptions.

"Scaling the Adventure" Sidebar (Mandatory)

This sidebar contains suggestions the DM can use for (a) modifying the adventure's encounters and antagonists for PCs of higher or lower level and/or (b) modifying the adventure for different game settings. The sidebar should be no longer than 500 words.

Showing Your Work

Many times, an adventure includes new magic items, new traps, and other unique additions. It is important to show your work where multiple calculations are involved (such as calculating skill point and feat totals for an NPC, as well as skill point distribution). Although not required, showing your work enables the editors to more thoroughly evaluate your adventure in a timely fashion.

The only time you will always be asked to show your work is in the gold piece cost for new magic items. You should also show the work for any DC whose total contains nonobvious adjustments. For instance, if a given Spot DC contains a circumstance adjustment in addition to the hiding creature's Hide check, the calculation should be shown.

There might be other occasions that also require you to show your work, though that is up to your discretion (only you know what sort of calculation went into a particular creation—if you'd rather demonstrate to the editors that your choice wasn't based on simple fancy, then showing your work is a good idea).

D&D Specific Formats

The following sections include information you need before writing an adventure.

Capitalization

Capitalize abilities (Strength, Dexterity, and so on), skill names (Search, Decipher Script, and so on), feat names (Whirlwind Attack, Quicken Spell, and so on), domains (Good, War, and so on), schools (Transmutation, Necromancy, and so on), names of languages (Common, Dwarven, and so on), sizes (Small, Medium-size, Large, and so on), and saving throw categories (Fortitude, Reflex, Will). The term "Dungeon Master" and the abbreviation "DM" are always capitalized.

Creatures, classes, alignments, spells, weapons, and magic items, that do not include proper nouns are all lower case.

Magic items and spell names are italicized. For example, magic weapons, potions, and other items should be fully italicized; scrolls are an exception. Spell scrolls have only the name of the spell italicized. Also, note that while the "plus" for weapons and armors is listed before the item, the "plus" for other items is listed after.

Examples: *+1 longsword*, a *potion of cure light wounds*, *cloak of resistance +2*, and a scroll of *arcane lock*.

Abbreviations

Abbreviations usually use all capital letters and no periods (DM, NPC, HD, XP). The abbreviations for hit points and coins use lower case

letters and no periods (hp, gp, sp). The abbreviation for experience points is XP.

Ability scores are abbreviated as follows: Str (Strength), Dex (Dexterity), Con (Constitution), Int (Intelligence), Wis (Wisdom), Cha (Charisma). Class abbreviations are as follows:

Abj = Abjurer (1)	Adp = Adept (2)
Arc = Arcane Archer (3)	Ari = Aristocrat (2)
Asn = Assassin (3)	Bbn = Barbarian
Blk = Blackguard (3)	Brd = Bard
Clr = Cleric	Cjr = Conjurer (1)
Com = Commoner (2)	Def = Dwarven Defender (3)
Div = Diviner (1)	Drd = Druid
Enc = Enchanter (1)	Evo = Evoker (1)
Exp = Expert (2)	Ftr = Fighter
Ill = Illusionist (1)	Lor = Loremaster (3)
Mnk = Monk	Nec = Necromancer (1)
Pal = Paladin	Rgr = Ranger
Rog = Rogue	Shd = Shadowdancer (3)
Sor = Sorcerer	Tra = Transmuter (1)
War = Warrior (2)	Wiz = Wizard

Bold classes appear in the *Player's Handbook*. Other classes are as follows:

- (1) Specialist wizard classes appearing in the *Player's Handbook*.
- (2) NPC classes appearing in the *DUNGEON MASTER's Guide*.
- (3) Prestige classes appearing in the *DUNGEON MASTER's Guide*.

Note: The names of core books and D&D supplements should never be abbreviated. So always spell out *Player's Handbook*. Don't write "PH."

Numbers

Numerals should be used for any measurement of distance expressed in yards (or meters) or any smaller unit. The spelled-out form of the number should be used for any expression of distance longer than yards (or meters), except when the expression is a specific large number. Correct: 750 miles, fifteen miles, 15 feet.

Numerals should be used for any measurement of time expressed in hours or any smaller unit. The spelled-out form should be used for any expression of time longer than hours, except when the expression is a specific large number. Correct: 648 years, forty-eight years, forty-eight days, 48 hours, 48 minutes.

Numerals should be used for any measurement of weight expressed in pounds (or kilograms) or any smaller unit. The spelled-out form of a number should be used for any expression of weight larger than pounds (or kilograms), except when the expression is a specific large number. Correct: twenty tons, 20 pounds.

Numerals are always used for geometric angles (for example, 45 degrees) and expressions of temperature (for example, 45°F), ability scores, skill ranks, skill points, creature statistics, amounts of currency, level references ("1st level," not "first level"), bonuses and penalties, experience points, dice designators (and say d%, not d100), multipliers, number of charges (in the context of a magic item that has charges), and number of times per day or other unit of time in a stat block (written as 2/day, 3/day, and so on). **Note:** Spell out feet, pounds, minutes, and all other units of measurement in non-stat block text.

Hyphenation

Always hyphenate class and spell levels when they precede a noun (4th-level rogue, 1st-level spell). Hyphenate compound adjectives before nouns (the red-haired, 18-foot-tall fire giant). Do not hyphenate before the suffix "-like" except after double-l endings (for example, snakelike, spell-like).

Skill Checks

When a situation in an adventure calls for a skill check of some sort, you have two choices for presenting the check. You can list the skill check in the running text and present a parenthetical with the DC number, or you can describe the situation and then list the skill check and DC number in the parenthetical.

Example: Player characters who want to enter the chamber must make a successful Climb skill check (DC 25) to get down the wall.

Example: Player characters who want to climb down into the chamber face quite a challenge (Climb check DC 25).

Remember that characters can usually retry skill checks (and usually take 20) or take 10. If the use of a skill is not routine, let the DM know in the adventure text whether a retry is allowed and what it entails. Generally, set DCs for tasks that characters can retry at 5 to 10 points higher than DCs for tasks that PCs can't retry.

Trap Presentation

Traps have several associated DC values the DM needs to adjudicate the PCs' application of their various skills. Whenever a trap is encountered, the following specific information should also be presented in the format below.

Creature Statistics

Monsters that are in every way standard versions of monsters of the same name in the *Monster Manual* do not require full-length statistics. When such creatures are described under Creatures, the entry should contain an abbreviated statistic block indicating creature name, number appearing, hit points, special equipment, and a *Monster Manual* reference page. The abbreviated statistics can include a few minor changes (such as an orc that is wearing plate armor and thus has a lower speed and a higher AC), but if the creature is changed significantly, it's a *Monster Manual* variant (see below).

Full-length statistics for all *Monster Manual* variants, new monsters, classed monsters, and NPCs should be provided in the area in which the creature or creatures are initially encountered.

Example: Zombies (3): hp 10, 9, 8; *Monster Manual* 191.

Multiclass Characters: The first element of a multiclass NPC stat block looks like this: NPC's name: [Gender] [race] [class abbreviation and level of first class acquired]/[class abbreviation and level of second class acquired]/and so on.

Example: Mulroony, Male gnome Bbn12/Rog6.

Armor Class: All AC modifiers (+2 Dex, +3 leather, +4 natural, and so on) should be included.

A creature or NPC's AC also includes the precalculated touch AC and flat-footed AC. For example: AC 20 (touch 12, flat-footed 18).

Weapon Stats: The default stat for any weapon is its damage. If the weapon's critical hit statistics (threat range and damage multiplier) are different from the minimum values (which are 20 and $\times 2$), provide those values after the damage figure and use slashes to separate each statistic.

Examples:

(1d6, club)

(1d10/ $\times 3$, dwarven waraxe)

(1d10/19–20, bastard sword)

(1d10+1/19–20/ $\times 3$, +1 keen dwarven waraxe)

Height (or Length) and Weight: These statistics are provided only if they are significant in the context of the adventure—it's not usually necessary to specify that a Medium-size humanoid is 6 feet tall (or whatever). When either of these statistics appears, the entry is appended to end of the first paragraph of the stat block, set off from what precedes it by a period.

Spellcasters: Three different formats can be used for listing spells, depending on the spellcasting class of the NPC. The formats are Spells Prepared for clerics (domains and domain spell treatment noted below), druids, paladins, and rangers ("Wisdom casters"), and Spells Known for

sorcerers and bards ("Charisma casters"). Wizards use Spells Prepared like the Wisdom casters, and may also use Spellbook when it is important to call out the spells contained in the wizard's spellbook.

The available number of spells prepared (for Wisdom casters and wizards) or slots available (for Charisma casters) should be summarized in order from lowest to highest level within parentheses.

Following this summary of numbers, provide the base DC for saving throws against the character's spells, in the form "base DC = # + spell level" where "#" is equal to 10 + the relevant ability modifier. If a character has the Spell Focus feat (which changes the base spell save DC for certain spells), mark each affected spell in some fashion, and include a note at the end of the list of spells on a separate line; see the cleric example below. Do not mark spells in this manner that do not require a saving throw.

The spells themselves are listed in alphabetical order by level. When a caster prepares a spell more than once, indicate this with a number in parentheses immediately following the spell in question.

Here's a sample spell list for a 5th-level sorcerer with a +3 Cha bonus. The initial numbers in parentheses indicate the number of spells the sorcerer can cast per day from any spells she knows of that level.

Spells Known (7/7/5; base DC = 13 + spell level): 0—*dancing lights*, *detect magic*, *flare*, *mage hand*, *mending*, *read magic*; 1st—*charm person*, *magic missile*, *sleep*, *summon monster I*; 2nd—*levitate*, *summon swarm*.

Specialist Wizards: A wizard who specializes in a school of magic can prepare one additional spell (of the school selected as a specialty) per spell level the character is capable of casting (including 0 level). In a list of spells prepared and in a spellbook list, if one is present, spells of the school being specialized in are marked with asterisks. A note about specialization and prohibited school(s) follows the spells prepared list (or the spellbook list, if one is present).

For example, here's a spell list for a 5th-level evoker (Evocation specialist) with a +4 Int bonus using the spellbook option:

Spells Prepared (5/5/4/3; base DC = 14 + spell level): 0—*dancing lights**, *daze* $\times 2$, *detect magic*, *flare**; 1st—*mage armor*, *magic missile**, *sleep*, *summon monster I* $\times 2$; 2nd—*daylight**, *invisibility* $\times 2$, *summon swarm*; 3rd—*fireball** $\times 2$, *stinking cloud*.

Spellbook: 0—*dancing lights**, *daze*, *detect magic*, *flare**, *light**, *read magic*; 1st—*comprehend languages*, *mage armor*, *magic missile**, *sleep*, *summon monster I*; 2nd—*arcane lock*, *daylight**, *invisibility*, *summon swarm*; 3rd—*fireball**, *stinking cloud*.

*These spells belong to the school of Evocation, which is this character's specialty. Prohibited school: Transmutation.

Clerics: Clerics have two domains and must choose one domain spell for each level of spell the character is capable of casting (except 0 level). As noted above, stat blocks for clerics use the "Spells Prepared" format. However, the stat block should also reflect the domain spells, domains, and granted powers. In the spell list, each domain spell is marked with an asterisk. The first line following the spell list identifies the character's domains and includes a short description (in parentheses) of that domain's granted power, as shown in the following example for a cleric with a +4 Wis bonus and the Spell Focus (Abjuration) feat.

Spells Prepared (5/5/5/4; base DC = 14 + spell level): 0—*light* $\times 2$, *read magic*, *resistance*, *virtue*; 1st—*bless*, *command*, *endure elements*, *invisibility to undead*, *obscuring mist**; 2nd—*aid**, *endurance* $\times 2$, *sound burst* $\times 2$; 3rd—*dispel magic*, *protection from elements**, *searing light*, *summon monster II*.

*Domain spell. **Domains:** Air (turn earth/rebuke air), Luck (reroll any dice roll 1/day).

†Because of Spell Focus (Abjuration), the base DC for saves against these spells is 16 + spell level.

Since granted powers of a domain are mentioned in this part of the stat block, this information should not be repeated as part of the character's special qualities.

Multiclass Spellcasters: For a cleric/wizard, bard/sorcerer, or any other character who has levels in more than one spellcasting class, generate separate spell lists for each class and change the header accordingly so it reads "Cleric Spells Prepared" or "Sorcerer Spells Known" or whatever. Present these separate spell lists in alphabetical order by class (bard, cleric, druid, paladin, ranger, sorcerer, wizard).

NPC and Creature Attitudes: It is a good idea to present NPCs with an initial "attitude," as templated on page 149 of the *DUNGEON MASTER's Guide* in Table 5-3: Initial NPC Attitudes. If you rate your NPCs in this fashion, it also probably a good idea in the adventure front matter to indicate you are taking advantage of the rules for NPC attitudes in the *DUNGEON MASTER's Guide*.

Stat Blocks for Nonclassed Monsters

Complete statistic blocks for adventures are formatted as follows. Text inside single brackets should be replaced with the appropriate information for the creature. Insert the appropriate numerical value in place of each number sign (#). Text inside double brackets is information for the editor only.

Nonclassified Creature Format

Nonclassified Creature's Name: CR #; [Size] [type] [(subtype)]; HD #d#; hp #; Init #; Spd # ft., second movement mode # ft. ([maneuverability for aerial movement]); AC #, touch #, flat-footed # [[AC modifiers]]; Atk +# melee [(weapon stats, attack type)] or +# ranged [(weapon stats, attack type)]; Face/Reach [if other than 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.]; SA [Short descriptions of special attacks; complex attacks are explained under Special Attacks]; SQ [Short descriptions of other abilities; complex abilities are explained under Special Qualities]; SR #; AL [alignment abbreviation]; SV Fort +#, Ref +#, Will +#; Str #, Dex #, Con #, Int #, Wis #, Cha #.

Skills and Feats: List skills in alphabetical order and provide the skill modifier (in the form +#) for each one. Modifiers that apply in special circumstances are explained in parentheses immediately after the base modifier. List feats in alphabetical order after skills, separating this list from the skill list with a period.

Special Ability name or Special Quality name (Ex/Su/Sp): Description of appropriate ability or quality here. Separate each special ability or special quality into a new paragraph, as is done in the *Monster Manual* entries.

Possessions: [Items worn or carried].

Physical Description: (if significant) [Details about appearance]

Omit categories for creatures that do not possess corresponding abilities, such as a Special Ability (SA) or Spell Resistance (SR).

Stat Blocks for *Monster Manual* Variants

This is a monster that started out as a *Monster Manual* entry but has been changed. This category of monster also includes creatures built using templates. If you create an ogre with four levels of barbarian, or a lich, or a half-dragon, you'll need to write out the stat block. Use the abbreviated stat block format in the text of the adventure, then refer the reader to the appendix, where the full stat block for the creature is printed.

Example: Gargoyle, advanced: CR 10; Large Magical Beast (Earth); HD 12d10+72; hp 165; Init +1; Spd 45 ft., fly 75 ft. (average); AC 16, touch 10, flat-footed 15 [[+1 Dex, -1 size, +6 natural]]; Atk +16 melee (1d4+5, 2 claws), +14 melee (1d6+5, bite), +14 melee (1d6+5, gore); SQ damage reduction 5/+1, freeze; AL CE; SV Fort +14, Ref +9, Will +6; Str 19, Dex 14, Con 22, Int 6, Wis 11, Cha 7. Height 8 ft.

Skills: Hide +13 (+21 in a background of worked stone), Listen +8, Spot +4. **Feats:** Multiattack, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (claw, bite, gore).

Freeze (Ex): When the gargoyle is standing still, an observer must make a successful Spot check (DC 20) to notice it is really alive.

Stat Blocks for Classed Creatures and NPCs

Protagonists & Antagonists: If you're expecting the PCs to fight them, or fight alongside them, they need stat block write-ups, just like *Monster Manual* variants: an abbreviated stat block in the text and a full stat block in the appendix.

Background Characters: If you need a 5th-level cleric to provide healing (but he's not going out on adventures) or even an 18th-level wizard to cast wish (but you don't expect she'll be doing much else during the adventure), or even three 5th-level warriors to back up an NPC in a tense situation, you don't need to stat them out; you can use the tables in Chapter 2 of the *DUNGEON MASTER's Guide* to determine the basic stats for such a character (and then include anything relevant in an abbreviated stat block). Somewhere in the adventure (probably the introduction), you'll have to tell the reader that the stats on these characters might be needed (if the PCs go out recruiting or unexpectedly charm the cleric and talk him into accompanying them) and that these characters conform to the information from in the *DUNGEON MASTER's Guide* tables—with changes as noted in your text (in the abbreviated stat block).

Classed Creature or NPC Format

Classed creature's or NPC's name, [Gender] [Race] [Class abbreviation & level]: CR #; [Size] [type] [(subtype)]; HD #d# [(creature kind)] plus #d# [(class abbreviation)]; or (for NPC) #d#; hp #; Init #; Spd # ft., second movement mode # ft. ([maneuverability for aerial movement]); AC #, touch #, flat-footed # [[AC modifiers]]; Atk +# melee [(weapon stats, attack type)] or +# ranged [(weapon stats, attack type)]; Face/Reach [if other than 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.]; SA [Short descriptions of special attacks, complex descriptions go under Special Attacks]; SQ [Short descriptions of special abilities, complex descriptions go under Special Qualities]; SR #; AL [alignment abbreviation]; SV Fort +#, Ref +#, Will +#; Str #, Dex #, Con #, Int #, Wis #, Cha #.

Skills and Feats: List skills in alphabetical order and provide the skill modifier (in the form +#) for each one. Modifiers that apply in special circumstances are explained in parentheses immediately after the base modifier. List feats in alphabetical order after skills, separating this list from the skill list with a period.

Special Ability name or Special Quality name (Ex/Su/Sp): description of appropriate ability or quality here. Separate each special ability or special quality into a new paragraph, as is done in the *Monster Manual* entries.

Possessions: [Items worn or carried].

Physical Description: (if significant) [Details about appearance]

Spells Prepared (#/#/#; base DC = # + spell level): 0—[cantrip, cantrip (2)]; 1st—[first, first]; 2nd—[second].

OR (if cleric)

Spells Prepared (#/#/#; base DC = # + spell level): 0—[orison, orison (2)]; 1st—[first*, first]; 2nd—[second*, second].

*Domain spell. Domains: [Domain (granted power); Domain (granted power)].

OR

Spells Known (#/#/#; base DC = # + spell level): 0—[cantrip, cantrip]; 1st—[first, first]; 2nd—[second].

AND (with Spells Prepared)

Spellbook: 0—[cantrip, cantrip, cantrip, cantrip, cantrip]; 1st—[first, first, first]; 2nd—[second, second, second]; 3rd—[third, third, third].

Examples:

Skurge Dwarfbane, Male Troll Bbn3: CR 8; Large Giant; HD 6d6+36 (troll) plus 3d12+18 (Bbn); hp 101; Init +6; Spd 40 ft.; AC 18, touch 11, flat-footed 16 [[+7 natural, +2 Dex, -1 size]]; Atk +12 melee (1d6+6, 2 claws), +7 melee (1d6+3, bite) or +12/+7 melee (1d12+9/x3, greataxe) or

+12/+7 melee (1d10+9 subdual, large sap); Face/Reach 5 ft. by 5 ft./10 ft.; SA rage, rend; SQ uncanny dodge, regeneration, scent (detects living creatures within 30 ft.); AL CN; SV Fort +14, Ref +3, Will +5; Str 23, Dex 14, Con 23, Int 6, Wis 10, Cha 6. Height 8 ft.

Skills: Jump +8, Listen +5, Spot +5. **Feats:** Alertness, Improved Initiative, Iron Will.

Rage (Ex): During his rage, Skurge has the following statistics instead of those given above: +18 hp, AC 16 (touch 9, flat-footed 14); Atk +14/+14/+9 melee (1d6+8, 2 claws; 1d6+4, bite) or +11 melee (1d12+12/x3, greataxe) or +11 melee (1d10+12 subdual, large sap); SV Fort +16, Will +7; Str 27, Con 27. **Skills:** Jump +10. The rage lasts 11 rounds, after which time the troll is fatigued. Skurge can rage once per day.

Rend (Ex): If a troll hits with both claw attacks, it latches onto the opponent's body and tears the flesh. This attack automatically deals an additional 2d6+9 points of damage.

Regeneration (Ex): Fire and acid deal normal damage to a troll. If a troll loses a limb or body part, the lost portion regrows in 3d6 minutes. The creature can reattach the severed member instantly by holding it to the stump.

Possessions: Greataxe with three gems embedded in the handle (500 gp, 100 gp, and 50 gp respectively), large leather sack containing six severed dwarf heads (can be used as a large sap, inflicting 1d10+9 points of subdual damage).

Jakasta the Sly, Female Human Rog2: CR 2; Medium-size Humanoid; HD 2d6+4; hp 16; Init +3; Spd 30 ft.; AC 15, touch 13, flat-footed 12 [+3 Dex, leather armor]; Atk +2 melee (1d4+2/19–20, +1 dagger) or +3 ranged (1d6/x3, shortbow); SA sneak attack +1d6; SQ evasion; SV Fort +2, Ref +8, Will –1; AL NG; Str 12, Dex 16, Con 14, Int 12, Wis 8, Cha 10.

Skills: Disable Device +6, Hide +7, Jump +3, Listen +2, Move Silently +8, Open Lock +6, Pick Pocket +6, Search +5, Spot +1, Tumble +7. **Feats:** Lightning Reflexes, Toughness.

Possessions: +1 dagger, leather armor, shortbow, 9 arrows, pouch containing 15 gp and 40 sp.

Jack Nightshade, Male Human Com1: CR 1/4; Medium-size Humanoid; HD 1d4–1; hp 5; Init +1; Spd 30 ft.; AC 11, touch 11, flat-footed 10 [+1 Dex]; Atk –1 melee (1d6–1, club) or –1 melee (1d3–1 subdual, unarmed strike); SV Fort –1, Ref +1, Will +0; AL NE; Str 9, Dex 12, Con 9, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 11. Height 5 ft. 8 in. Weight 250 lb.

Skills: Climb +1, Listen +1, Use Rope +2. **Feats:** Dodge, Toughness.

Possessions: Club, pouch containing 4 sp and 16 cp.

Cardboard Characters: The cooper is a 5th-level expert. The captain of the town guard is a 5th-level warrior. The tavernkeeper is a 1st-level commoner/2nd-level expert. These are characters who you don't want to function outside the background of the adventure and you don't ever expect to need extensive stats for. No full stat block, but an abbreviated stat block is necessary. The cooper might need to make a Craft check for the PCs, or the captain could have some advice for the adventurers, but they aren't supposed to fight or die.

When a commoner or other unimportant NPC is noted but is not in any way vital to the adventure, a short stat block can be used in running text, or broken out into its own paragraph, if desired. This short stat block provides gender, creature kind, class, and any relevant skills or feats bearing on the encounter.

Example: If they stop at this location, the PCs encounter Jack Nightshade (male human Com1; Use Rope +2), who sells rope in the bazaar.

New Monsters

In general, if you create a new monster, you don't need a stat block. What you do need is a full *Monster Manual* entry, presented in *Monster Manual* format. New monsters should be presented in their own side-

bars or as an appendix at the end of the adventure. Abbreviated statistics can be provided with a reference to the location of the full-length statistics block.

City and Town Statistics

Much like creatures, cities and towns in D&D have a wide range of information that the DM needs to know to run encounters within the city. The suggested format for writing statistics for cities and towns is as follows:

Name (size): [Power center type: Conventional, Nonstandard, or Magical]; AL [alignment abbreviation]; # gp limit; Assets # gp; Population # adults; [Racial mix: Isolated, Mixed, or Integrated] [(race #, race #, race #, race #, race #, race #, etc.).] **NOTE:** The number following each race name is a percentage of the entire population, not the exact number of individuals of that race.

Authority Figure(s): [Name, gender race class & level.]

Important Characters: [Name, gender race class & level (title or position); name, gender race class & level (title or position); name, gender race class & level (title or position).]

Others: [Group name, class & level (#); class & level (#).] **Note:** The numbers in this entry are the exact numbers of residents of each type.

Notes: Place any special notes about the community here.

Example: Oakhurst (small town): Conventional; AL NG; 1,000 gp limit; Assets 45,000 gp; Population 901; Mixed (human 79%, halfling 9%, elf 5%, dwarf 3%, gnome 2%, half-elf 1%, half-orc 1%).

Authority Figures: Mayor Vurnor Leng, male human Ari7.

Important Characters: Kerowyn Hucrele, female human Com6 (merchant); Dem "Corkie" Nackle, female gnome Clr4 (Pelor/healer); Felosial, female half-elf War3 (constable); Ben, Lu, Jym, and Roda, male and female humans War4 (deputies); Rurik Lutgehr, male dwarf Exp3 (blacksmith); Garon, male human Exp3 ("Ol' Boar Inn" barkeep).

Others: Town guards, War2 (12); Exp3 (8); Rog3 (2); Rgr2 (1); Com1 (782).

Notes: The saplings growing at the edge of town go missing, possibly during the PCs very next visit to Oakhurst. Unbeknownst to the villagers, the saplings animate as twig blights in the dark of night, and they scuttle off on their own, continuing their slow colonization of the surface—see twig blights in the appendix.

Object Statistics

Any items that the player characters may need to interact with in some manner should have statistics in the manuscript. Common examples include doors, chairs, chests, and barrels.

Object: # in. or ft. thick; hardness #; hp #; AC #; Break DC #; Open Lock DC #.

Example: Wooden Doors: 1 in. thick; hardness 5; hp 10; AC 5; Break DC 18.

If an object needs only a few of these statistics listed, this can be done in running text.

Example: Inside the room is a single wooden chair (hardness 5, hp 10).

Magic Item Format

When writing magic items, you should use a specific format. If a category doesn't apply to an item, it should not be included in the write-up of the item.

Magic Item: [Descriptive text about the item and its powers should go here. It may take more than one paragraph to completely detail the item.]

Caster Level: #; **Prerequisites:** feats, skills, spells, etc. (alpha order within each category); **Market Price:** # gp; **Weight:** # lb.

Example: Horseshoes of a Zephyr: These four iron shoes can be affixed like normal horseshoes, but they allow a horse to travel without actually touching the ground. The horse must still run above (always around 4 inches above) a roughly horizontal surface. This means that

nonsolid or unstable surfaces, such as water or lava can be crossed and that movement is possible without leaving tracks on any sort of ground. The horse is able to move at normal speeds.

Caster Level: 3rd; *Prerequisites:* Craft Wondrous Item, *levitate*; *Market Price:* 3,000 gp; *Weight:* 1 lb. each.

Tense

Write in the present tense. Wherever possible, avoid using the future tense “will” to describe NPC or monster actions. For example, do not say “If the player characters open the door, the golem will attack.” Instead say, “If the player characters open the door, the golem attacks.”

Damage

Use the phrase “points of damage” when giving damage in numbers or ranges. Always use a die range when giving damage, and always include a numeral before the type of die, even if there is only one. For example: “The skeleton deals 1d3 points of damage with each claw” is correct. Do not use “d3 points of damage,” “1d3 damage,” or “1d3 hp damage.” Creatures deal or take damage. They do not inflict or suffer damage.

Ability damage or drain uses the appropriate ability score abbreviation and terminology. Use the following formats in running text or stat block text:

temporary [ability name] damage

permanent [ability name] drain

Example: “If the saving throw fails, the character takes 1d6+1 points of temporary Strength damage from the poison.”

Design Tips

Before setting out to write an adventure, familiarize yourself with the rules and game setting. Be aware of the specifics of the game system for which you are writing.

Describe encounters fully. Make sure no relevant details of encountered creatures are left out (including hit points, ability scores, and so on). With the first mention of a creature, detail the weapons and equipment carried by the creature, along with relevant personality and reaction notes. Major NPCs should be well-rounded characters with specific motivations and behaviors consistent with their alignment. All encounters, hazards, rewards, details on the environment, and information required for combat or accomplishing the mission should be detailed in a way that enables the DM to run through the scenario without trouble. We prefer adventures with strong plot elements (good stories). The encounters in an adventure should relate directly to the adventuring goal. Encounters that are interconnected and critical to the adventure's plot are best. Illogical adventure set-ups in which monsters and treasures are randomly thrown together should be avoided. This does not mean one cannot use random encounter tables, but the tables should be logical and consistent with the adventuring environment, making the overall adventure sensible and believable.

Indoor complexes laid out in perfect symmetry are dull; use creativity, even if the final result isn't perfect architecture. Avoid using large mazes.

Situations in your module that violate established game rules should be handled carefully. Do not alter game rules. Other alterations, such as new monsters and treasures, are permissible but should not be overused. You may also add new material that expands on the rules, such as rules on adventuring in unusual environments. If you decide to create a new monster for your adventure, try to make it important to the overall plot. New monsters thrown in that don't have an impact on the storyline are wasted effort.

A good adventure includes encounters that challenge both the players and the characters. Furthermore, the adventure should test the various classes and skills in the party so that no player character feels

excluded or superfluous. An adventure that contains nothing but combat encounters is not as interesting or well balanced as one that combines combat encounters, traps, puzzles, and roleplaying opportunities. Consider ways to surprise players with each encounter: cunning ways to use monsters and traps, clever methods to conceal treasure, and so forth. When devising encounters, consider giving PCs multiple ways to succeed. Not all encounters can be won with swords and fireballs, not every monster “fights to the death,” and not every trap or puzzle has just one solution.

Don't over-reward players or under-challenge them. Take the time to make rewards consistent and believable as well as balanced. (Note that the *DUNGEON MASTER'S Guide* provides rules for determining how much treasure is appropriate for any given encounter.) Nonmonetary rewards (such as a lord's gratitude or small plot of land) are equally favorable. Do not create opponents that would totally overwhelm a party.

We will look at any innovative ideas that involve changes in a module's structure. Such innovations should not, however, interfere with the playability of the module or the gamers' enjoyment.

Ideas To Explore

Modules that rely on new magic items, monsters, weapons, or prestige classes to carry them are not as interesting as modules that present fast-paced, exciting, enjoyable adventures. If you create something new (such as a new magic item used by an important NPC), make sure its presence in the module is justified, that it is fully explained in terms of its effects in the game, and that it is reasonable and fits with the game rules.

Location-based adventures are preferable to event-based ones. Unlike event-based scenarios, which tend to rely on rigid timelines, location-based scenarios are based around interesting sites that characters can explore for one or more sessions: for example, dungeons, castles, strongholds, catacombs, ancient ruins, or cities. Adventures that present fantastic locations filled with diverse, well-thought-out encounters are ideal. For more information on designing location-based adventures, consult the *DUNGEON MASTER'S Guide*.

We are also interested in short adventures called “Side Treks.” These mini-adventures can be constructed in one of two ways. First, if the adventure runs around 2,000 words long, it will be considered a “Side Trek.” Alternatively, they can feature one primary encounter (typically a combat encounter) and no more than one secondary encounter (such as a social situation or trap). “Side Treks” are intended to be easily dropped into an evening's game. Unusual monster lairs, city encounters, and small ruins may be presented, but each should be unique, interesting, well detailed, and backed by a compelling story. “Side Treks” do not require a proposal to be sent first. However, longer adventures submitted as a “Side Trek” and without a proposal will be rejected without consideration.

Elements an Adventure Should Have

Incorporating the suggestions below provides depth to your design. These suggestions allow every character class a chance to shine. It provides several alternatives to straight combat encounters. It might provide you with ideas you might not have otherwise entertained. Look at it as an inspirational list, not a recipe to be strictly followed.

Action

Action is fun. Action is good. Promote action. Make the players want to take action. Don't coerce characters to act; when you do, you create a split between what the players want (to go on the adventure) and what the PCs want (not to go on the adventure).

Start with action. A typical gaming group has several minutes to an hour of “preparation” at the start of a session. Once the adventure is underway, the dice should start rolling (at least figuratively) very soon.

Conclude with action. Let the actions of the PCs (not the actions of NPCs) resolve the adventure.

Reward action. Players would usually rather act than think. Build

encounters that reward the players for taking the initiative. (This doesn't mean that the PCs should always win when they stumble through an adventure. A fight is rewarding to the players even if it's a big drain for the PCs.) Thinking is okay too. Some encounters should reward (or even require) thought. A good balance is an encounter that PCs can handle by brute force or that they can handle more easily with some good tactics. Warn players when action is bad. If you're going to reward and encourage action most of the time, it's only fair to give players some warning when the PCs are coming to an encounter where "kicking open the door" is a bad idea. That way they can appreciate a "thinking" encounter as a good thinking encounter rather than stumbling into it and finding it to be a bad combat encounter.

Be careful about traps. If you sprinkle in traps randomly, the smart PC response is to take every room or area slowly and cautiously. That might be smart, but it's boring. Some hint that the characters are entering a trapped area helps the players slow down and be cautious when they need to without slowing the whole game to a crawl.

Danger

An adventure needs danger, but not too much. For a character to rise one level requires that she face 13–14 encounters on average. If her chance to die in an average encounter is even 5%, she has just over a 50% chance to make it to the next level.

Randomness is dangerous. In any contest, an increase in randomness favors the underdog. The monsters are the underdogs because the PCs almost always win. Thus, any increase in randomness favors the monsters. These things increase randomness:

- High crit multiples (axes, scythes, picks, and so forth)
- Concealment (miss chances)
- Single, powerful creatures
- "Save or sink" powers: poison, petrification, death gaze, and the like.

Vary the danger level. Make some encounters weaker and others stronger. If the characters have a chance to recover or are likely to be fresh, you can increase the danger (the Encounter Level). If the characters are likely to be weak or if they have to fight a series of encounters, be careful. Even a fight that they're certain to win at full strength can kill weakened party members and can drain them to the point at which later encounters become lethal.

Peak fights are cool. Players want to take on the big boss monster. Let them, but be careful. If they've had to fight past guards and traps, they'll be weak by the time they face the boss. If his defenses are good, he doesn't have to be more than a single EL above the party level to be dangerous.

Other Encounter Types

- Tactical positioning of PCs/NPCs
- Encounters you can "outsmart" (and bypass thereby)
- Encounters you can make easier by thinking
- Monsters/encounters you should probably run from
- Roleplaying encounters ("Let's make a deal...")
- Sonic attacks (for bard to counter)
- Area attacks (so rogues and monks can use evasion)
- Encounters where PCs should have to use abilities of their level (5th-level PCs can fly, so there should be an encounter that assumes that at least one PC can fly)
- Climbing, falling, and doing stuff in high places
- Aerial attacks
- Fear (so the paladin can shine)
- Undead (for the cleric)
- Traps (for the rogue)
- Locked doors (for the rogue)
- Secret doors (for elves and the rogue)
- Normal animals (so the druid can use her animal affinity-related abilities)
- Darkness (and other environmental hazards)

- Use of cover and concealment
- Subdual damage
- Situations in which skills and feats are more applicable than spells and items
- Situations in which spells are better than swords
- Situations in which swords are better than spells
- Grappling
- Counterspelling
- Alliances (PCs with NPCs, PCs with monsters, NPCs with monsters, monsters with monsters, and so on)
- NPCs that think like PCs
- Multiclass/prestige classes
- Monster classes
- Poison
- Gaze attacks
- Spell enhancement (pre-cast spells of creatures)

Things To Avoid

Avoid stereotypical material. We will usually reject any adventure in which the heroes must:

- Rescue someone's kidnapped daughter.
- Solve a murder perpetrated by a doppelganger.
- Retrieve an ancient artifact.
- Battle a deranged wizard or sorcerer.
- Repel a simple humanoid infestation.
- Defeat an undead army.
- Close a gate to the Abyss or similarly infernal plane.

This list is not all-inclusive. There are many more overused plot devices that might seem new and fresh to you, but that we see many times each month. (This includes beginning your adventure in a tavern or inn. Don't do it.) We're looking for new ideas or fresh approaches to old ideas. We do not accept adventures that require evil PCs or that ask the PCs to slay good characters or monsters. Avoid hooks that force the PCs to play the role of mercenaries for hire, as well. If you have to "hire the PCs for a job," you probably don't have a strong enough hook.

Avoid excessively linear plots that force the story toward an inevitable conclusion or "railroad" the actions of the PCs. The adventure should be flexible enough for PCs to make choices and decisions that could affect the outcome of the story. Avoid rigid timelines.

High-level adventures should keep the balance of the game in perspective and should challenge the players without damaging the DM's world set-up. Note that higher-level adventures are more difficult to design, as more factors and influences must be taken into account. Powerful magic, if not accounted for, can take the PCs from the opening of an adventure to its conclusion in one fell swoop. Adventures that require the characters to kill deities or "save the world" are not likely to be accepted. Avoid adventures that propose dramatic changes to the campaign world. This includes adventures in which the fate of entire kingdoms hangs in the balance, where the world is threatened by some great cataclysm, or deities play active roles in the outcome of a scenario. Tastelessness should be strictly avoided. Do not submit adventures involving the destruction of children or helpless persons, cruel mistreatment of animals, excessive gore or violence, descriptions of Satan or Satanism, or game versions of major religious figures. Explicit sex, the encouragement of substance abuse, offensive language, and bathroom humor cannot be used.

Remember that the PCs are the protagonists and central figures of the adventure. Do not use NPCs to help the player characters excessively. NPCs who step in and eliminate all opposition to the PCs, lead the PC party, and accomplish the PCs' goals for them are very dangerous to campaigns. Set up the adventure to challenge the PCs, and let them make it on their own.

Finally, avoid adventures that lack a villain, or feature a villain without an agenda. Villains who are "just evil" but don't actually pursue some

nefarious purpose that would bring them into conflict with the PCs are not worth an adventure. Villains with tedious or stereotypical agendas are likewise unworthy of attention. Make your villains vile, and their plots truly nefarious.

DO NOT . . .

- Design magic items or spells that confer dodge bonuses
- Use defunct rules from previous editions.
- Create a character ability that requires an activation check for use (for example, 30% chance to succeed at something)
- Create a feat or a magic item that allows a nonspellcasting character (of a nonspellcasting class) to cast a spell.
- Use the word “memorized” when referring to the preparation of spells; “prepared” is the correct term.

Adventure Settings

Our readers prefer “generic” adventures that fit easily into any campaign setting. Thus, we are looking for generic adventures that suit a variety of settings with minimal effort. Adventures not limited to a particular game setting have a better chance of acceptance than adventures restricted to one particular D&D campaign setting. The fewer setting-specific details you include in your adventure, the more useful the scenario. Try to confine your adventure to a relatively small area; it’s far simpler for DMs to insert a town into their ongoing campaigns than an entire kingdom.

All generic adventures should conform to the campaign rules presented in the *DUNGEON MASTER’S Guide* and use the same pantheon of deities presented in the core rules. The *Player’s Handbook* provides a list of D&D deities; we prefer that you use this list instead of creating your own deities.

In addition to generic adventures, we also publish adventures set in the *FORGOTTEN REALMS® Campaign Setting*. *FORGOTTEN REALMS* adventures are published less frequently than generic D&D scenarios, and only when excellent adventures in this setting become available.

We are not looking for adventures designed specifically for out-of-print campaign settings (including the *AL-QADIM®*, *BIRTHRIGHT®*, *DARK SUN®*, *DRAGONLANCE®*, *MYSTARA®*, *PLANESCAPE®*, *RAVENLOFT®*, and *SPELLJAMMER®* campaign settings). However, we are looking for generic adventures that include “Adapting the Adventure” sidebars explaining how DMs can modify the adventures for specific, out-of-print campaign settings. For example, if you are submitting a planar adventure, try to include a sidebar describing how the module can be modified to suit the *Planescape* campaign setting (and possibly other campaign settings as well).

Feel free to use material from other official sources of D&D material published by Wizards of the Coast, Inc. *Sword & Fist*, the *Psionics Handbook*, or the *Manual of the Planes* are all excellent resources. Just make sure that any material pulled from these sources (such as a spell, prestige class, or feat) is included in its entirety so DMs without access to these books can still run the adventure.

Adventures may also be based on previously published modules copyrighted by Wizards of the Coast, Inc. Do not use settings or material extracted from copyrighted sources other than those owned by Wizards of the Coast, Inc.

Playtesting Submissions

Your module should be playtested before you complete the final draft. The best playtesting is done by an inexperienced DM and group who try to play from the manuscript without help.

Experienced players are a good way to find rule inconsistencies, but they may gloss over basic aspects of play or assume local house rules, thereby missing some problems. The least efficient method of playtesting is for you—the author—to run the game, because you tend to mentally fill in the holes, especially holes in game mechanics and encounter staging.

We prefer that adventures be playtested using four characters of equal

level (for example, four 6th-level characters). Each character should possess “standard” abilities and equipment for her given class.

In terms of game mechanics, was enough information given to run the adventure’s NPCs, supporting characters, and creatures? Were there any rules questions that came up during play? Did you need to reference any rules? Was the amount of treasure and magic items given out appropriate? For manuscript organization, consider: Was the text of the adventure easy to understand? Were any sections contradictory? Were any important points not covered? Was the information given in a logical order? Were the maps and diagrams neat, clearly labeled, and easy to use?

Narrative elements are vital to making a manuscript fun to read and play. Did the adventure hook work, or did the players have to be railroaded? Was the pacing too fast or too slow? Were there encounters that interfered with the flow of the adventure? Did the plot flow logically from the background? Were the NPCs’ actions consistent with their goals and alignment? Did the manuscript help create the proper mood? Is the conclusion satisfying?

Finally, are the challenges appropriate for the recommended level(s) of play? Was the adventure a “killer dungeon” or a cakewalk? Was the DM ever forced to “fudge” things in the party’s favor to keep the adventure going? Did the players solve mysteries easily, or did they need lots of hints?

Appendix A: Back To the Dungeon!

One of the goals of 3rd Edition is to take the D&D game “back to the dungeon.” Dungeons facilitate game play. Being underground, dungeons set apart the “adventure” from the rest of the world in a clean way. Of course, not all dungeons must be underground. “Dungeon” could mean any self-contained environment. This includes castles, ancient ruins, outer-planar strongholds, and other locales. One of the virtues of the “dungeon” is that it can be transplanted easily into any D&D campaign with minimal effort.

In a dungeon, the parameters are clearly defined for the players—they can’t go beyond the walls or into rooms that aren’t there. Still, they can go wherever they like in whatever order they like. There is a feeling of control of one’s own destiny in a limited environment for players in a dungeon. Try to move away from “story-based” or “event-driven” adventures and more toward adventures where the players feel like they have control over what happens during the game.

Dungeons often include many different kinds of challenges—combat, tactics, navigation, overcoming obstacles and traps, and more. They encourage players to pay close attention to their environment, as everything in a dungeon is a potential danger.

D&D classes, spells, magic items, and other facets of the game have been designed with dungeons in mind. Take advantage of this aspect when you’re designing your dungeon. Find opportunities for the dwarf PC to notice unusual stonework (and have it matter to the adventure) or areas where only a PC’s darkvision (or a light spell) will show the way. Make the players feel like they’ve “beaten” an aspect of the dungeon because they’ve used the rules correctly.

When in doubt for creating an adventure, use a dungeon. Use the material in the *DUNGEON MASTER’S Guide* to help. The *DUNGEON MASTER’S Guide* provides plenty of excellent dungeon-building tools, encounter charts, challenge rating gauges, and all sorts of things vital to creating adventures. Try to come up with new twists and new ways of doing things—but try to feature the rules rather than break or bend them.

Despite the exploration and combat-intensive nature of dungeons, don’t neglect to include opportunities for PCs to interact with NPCs. Interaction can, and should, be a big part of dungeon adventuring. Monsters and encounters in the D&D game should be smart and challenging. As playtests have already shown, PCs are tougher and have more options now . . . and the same goes for their opponents. Allow for places where PCs can use their noncombat skills and where players can demonstrate their roleplaying (as opposed to “roll-playing”) abilities.

WRITER'S GUIDELINES ADDENDUM

HOW TO DESIGN "CRITICAL THREATS"

A new feature of *DUNGEON Magazine*, "Critical Threats," will appear in the magazine on a regular basis. The goal is to include at least one or two "Critical Threats" in each issue, and the following guidelines are an effort to provide contributors with the necessary information to write and submit their own ideas for the feature.

What Are "Critical Threats"?

Good adventure design usually begins with the creation of an interesting villain or a unique location. "Critical Threats" are intended to provide DMs with one of these basic components for an adventure of their own design.

The two types of "Critical Threats"—villains and lairs—are similar in format, but there are distinct differences authors need to keep in mind when preparing a submission for the feature.

Stat Block

For NPC "Critical Threats," a complete stat block is required. This is typically the first thing listed on the page, and authors are encouraged to show their math. That is, show how you distributed skill points. Show math for calculating Armor Class, saves, and number of feats. Failing to show this information will not automatically mean we reject your "Critical Threat," but it does make the job of evaluating your submission easier and faster.

For spellcasters, you need not show complete spell lists. (Part of the draw of NPC "Critical Threats" is to allow DMs to customize the characters a little bit without having to go to all the work of building a villain from the ground up.) The only exceptions to this rule are wizards' spellbooks, which should be included with any wizard submission.

Finally, remember to include a Possessions section; consult page 58 in the *DUNGEON MASTER'S Guide* for treasure allocation values for NPCs.

Background

Relevant only to villain "Critical Threats," this section should provide a concise, compelling character background.

Touch on only those events in the NPC's life

that someone using this character in a game might find relevant. Examples include potential enemies or rivalries, key events in the villain's life, and so forth.

Read-Aloud Text or Appearance

Read-aloud text should be included for all lair "Critical Threats." Although not necessary, this helps DMs come up with convincing descriptions to give the players. Make sure read-aloud text sets a suitable mood and tone, but avoid too many specifics (mentioning the specific liquid that makes up a whirlpool in a room, for example). Left vague, this sort of information allows DMs to customize each room for their own purposes.

The Appearance section of an NPC "Critical Threat" serves a similar purpose: It provides DMs with information to give players when they encounter the character. The Appearance section is also important since it provides our artists with the information they need to accurately render an accompanying portrait.

Tactics

For villains, this section provides DMs with specifics they can use to run the character. Examples include favorite spells to cast (either in anticipation of a conflict or during one), which sort of foe, if any, the villain favors attacking, and what sort of environment the villain favors.

For lairs, this section should be devoted to options to alter the specifics of the room. Examples include the aforementioned liquid found in a whirlpool. Provide DMs with different options for the pool's substance and the in-game effects each substance has. Also include possibilities for varying the room's dimensions (typically height), possible traps that would suit the area well, and the sorts of villains that might find this room particularly appealing and why.

Development

In both cases, this section should be devoted to exploring adventure hooks for the villain or room and where or why the PCs would encounter the "Critical Threat." Provide at least two hooks per "Critical Threat." More are welcome, but space usually only permits the printing of no more than three hooks.

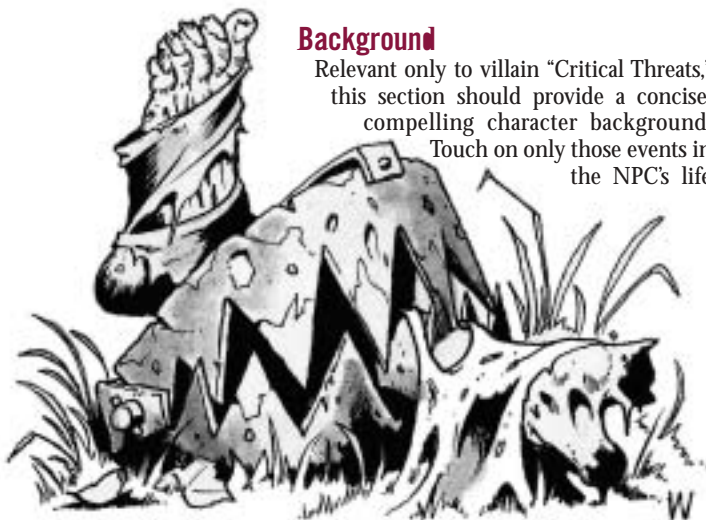
For rooms, be as specific as you like. Don't hesitate to come up with the names of villains who might occupy the location, and a few tactics they might employ there.

For villains, make sure the hooks are plausible and engaging, yet generic enough that the villain can easily be inserted into most campaign settings.

How to Submit "Critical Threats"

Send your submissions (no proposal required) via regular mail to Editor, *DUNGEON Magazine*, Paizo Publishing, LLC., 3245 146th Place SE, Suite 110, Bellevue, WA 98007 or via email to dungeon@paizopublishing.com. Restrict all submissions to 750–1,000 words. Include a Standard Disclosure Form (available on our website) and an SASE with each submission.

A character sketch for villains is optional, but a clean, clear map must be included for lair submissions. Submissions set in the FORGOTTEN REALMS are welcome.



STANDARD DISCLOSURE FORM[®]

Dungeon

I wish to submit the following materials for consideration for publication by Wizards of the Coast, Inc., subject to all of the conditions below.

Working Title of submission and brief description (please type or print legibly)

I submit my materials voluntarily and on a nonconfidential basis. I understand that this submission by me and its review by Wizards of the Coast, Inc. does not, in whole or in part, establish or create by implication or otherwise any relationship between Wizards of the Coast, Inc. and me that is not expressed herein. I further understand and agree that Wizards of the Coast, Inc., in its own judgment, may accept or reject the materials that are submitted with this Disclosure Form and shall not be obligated to me in any way with respect to my submission until Wizards of the Coast, Inc. shall, at its own election, enter into a properly executed written agreement with me, and only then according to the terms of such an agreement.

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