

Monster ENCyclopedia: Tarrasque

This is a series of articles about specific monsters from D&D's history. Each entry takes a look at the origin of one D&D creature, and tracks its appearances and evolution across different editions. For the letter "T", we are turning our attention to the legendary tarrasque.

Contents

[Origins](#)

[1st Edition](#)

[2nd Edition](#)

[3rd Edition](#)

[4th Edition](#)

[5th Edition](#)

[Tarrasque variations](#)

[Tarrasque relatives](#)

[Tarrasque parts](#)

[Tarrasques and other monsters](#)

[Tarrasques and gods](#)

[Tarrasques and magic](#)

[Tarrasque FAQs](#)

[Council of Wyrms](#)

[Dark Sun](#)

[Dragonlance](#)

[Eberron](#)

[Forgotten Realms](#)

[Greyhawk](#)

[Historical Reference](#)

[Kingdoms of Kalamar](#)

[Ravenloft](#)

[Spelljammer](#)

[Comparative statistics](#)

[References](#)

Origins

The tarrasque comes to Dungeons & Dragons from French legend, in particular from the *Golden Legend* manuscripts of the mid-thirteenth century. The beast is described variously as a mixture of a dragon, a lion, a bear, an ox, a turtle, a scorpion and a fish. In the first century AD, the tarasque (with one "r") rampaged across southern France destroying crops and property, and hunting humans as food. Armed forces failed to stop the beast, but Saint Martha was able to charm it with hymns and prayers. She led the tamed beast back to the town of Tarascon, whereupon the citizens slaughtered it. Then, feeling guilty, they changed the name of their town to honor it. These events were only documented about a thousand years after they happened, so scholars may have a few of the details wrong. Nonetheless, the town of Tarascon continues to celebrate the tarasque in an annual festival to this day.



Saint Martha and the tarasque, various 15th century depictions, images from [Wikipedia](#)

Over the centuries, there have been many different depictions of Saint Martha's encounter with the tarasque. These disagree wildly on which animals the tarasque is composed of, but what may surprise anyone familiar with the D&D version is how consistently small the legendary beast is shown to be—usually dog size, or at most the size of a horse. The statue of the tarasque near King René's Castle in the town of Tarascon is a little larger, roughly the size of a truck, but still nowhere near the gargantuan beast that it has always been in D&D.



Tarrasque statue in Tarascon, image from [Dragons Wiki](#)

1st Edition

The first appearance of the tarrasque in D&D is in the *Monster Manual II*. The book is credited to Gary Gygax, but as Gygax notes in his [ENWorld Q&A thread](#), the tarrasque was contributed by François Marcela-Froideval, a French game designer working at TSR during the period when the *Monster Manual II* was being developed. Gygax felt that D&D needed at least one nearly indestructible mythical creature, so the tarrasque made it into the book.

What does the *Monster Manual II* tell us about the tarrasque? It is a unique creature, large in size and fifty feet long. The tarrasque has the intelligence of an animal and neutral alignment. It spends most of its time dormant in an underground lair, waking up every 5-20 months to forage for one or two weeks. Once every decade or so, it rampages for several months before entering a longer period of sleep (4-16 years). When it is awake, the tarrasque ravages the land around it, destroying or consuming all vegetation and animal life. It eats anything living, with a preference for warm-blooded creatures. It takes years for an area to recover from a tarrasque attack.



Monster Manual II (1983)

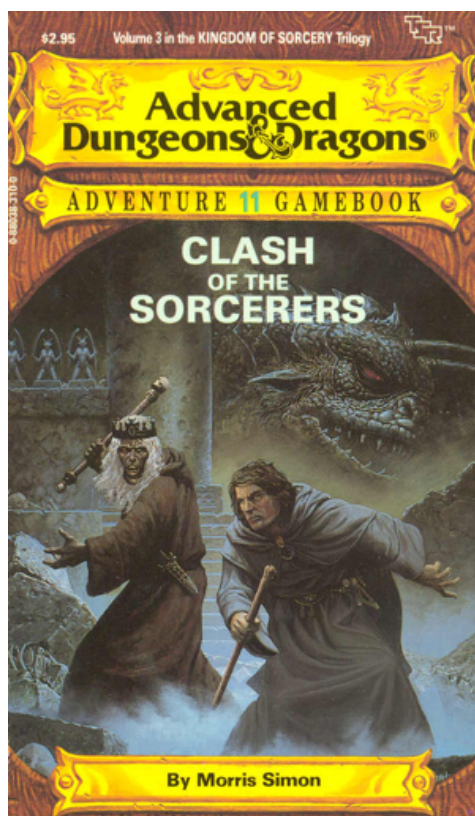
The mere sight of a tarrasque causes creatures of up to 3 hit dice to become paralysed, and creatures of up to 6 hit dice to flee until the tarrasque is out of sight. Creatures of 7 hit dice or more only flee if they fail a save vs. paralysis. It has a speed of 9" (not quite as fast as a human), but can boost this by an extra 6" once per turn. It has an armor class of -3 and 300 hit points.

There was an unfortunate typo in the tarrasque's stat block listing the claw damage as "1-12/1-2" instead of "1-12/1-12", and frankly, its front limbs do look a little feeble in the illustration. The correct damage for each of the tarrasque's six attacks is: 1d12 for each front claw, 2d12 for a tail lash, 1d10 for each horn and a massive 5d10 for its bite. That's a range of 11-118 damage, and an average of 64½ per round, if all attacks hit. The bite attack works like a *sword of sharpness*, severing an appendage on a roll of 18 or higher.

The tarrasque has considerable defenses. It is immune to fire, all non-magical weapons and psionics. It regenerates 1 hit point per round. The tarrasque's carapace reflects all magical bolts and rays, and even *magic missiles*. One in six of these attacks bounces back directly at the caster. To kill a tarrasque requires that it be reduced from 300 to -30 hit points, and then a *wish* spell must be used to kill it permanently. If this isn't done, the creature will eventually regenerate.

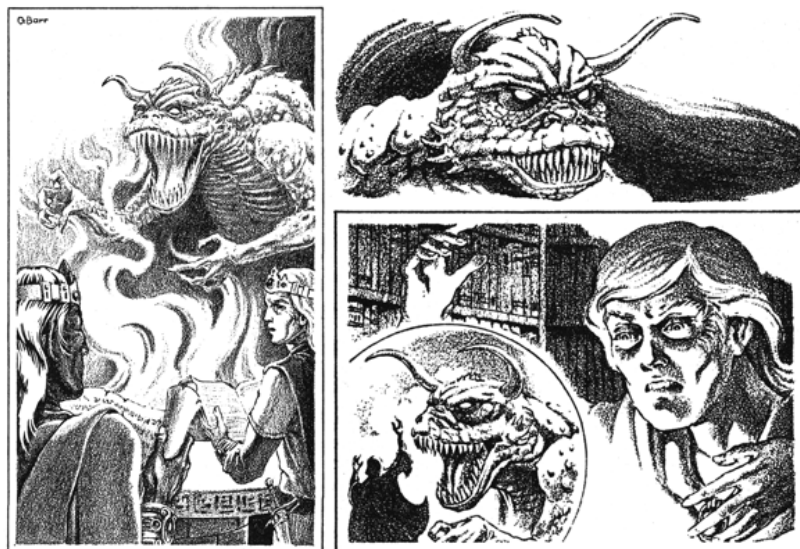
In the six years between the *Monster Manual II* and 2nd Edition, the tarrasque kept a relatively low profile in RPG products. The pronunciation guide in *Dragon #93* gives "ta-R@SK" (@ = the "a" in "fat") as the right way to say it. It also shows up in a few setting-specific 1st Edition adventures (*H2: The Mines of Bloodstone*, *H4: The Throne of Bloodstone* and *DL16: World of Krynn*) but we'll look at those later. Where the tarrasque did feature prominently was in two of the *AD&D Adventure Gamebooks* published in the mid 1980s.

The trilogy of gamebooks known as the *Kingdom of Sorcery* is set in the world of Tikandia. The first book in the trilogy does not mention the tarrasque, but in the second (*The Sorcerer's Crown*) the protagonist, Carr Delling, learns the story of the tarrasque responsible for destroying the Bhukodian Empire. This creature is now imprisoned in a tomb, bound by powerful magics. Later in the story, it is possible for Carr to accidentally turn his bard companion into a tarrasque by casting a spell. Needless to say, this brings the story to an abrupt end.



Clash of the Sorcerers (1986)

The tarrasque plays a much more significant role in *Clash of the Sorcerers*, the third book in the trilogy, including an appearance on the cover. Set several years after the previous installment, Carr Delling must enter the tomb of the tarrasque he learned about in *The Sorcerer's Crown*. There, he is in a race against time to stop a rival wizard from either freeing the tarrasque or acquiring a *robe of the archmagi* (or both). Several possible branches of the story include encounters with the tarrasque, including one where the two rival wizards combine their *limited wish* spells to make a *wish* spell powerful enough to slay the beast.



Clash of the Sorcerers (1986)

2nd Edition

The 2nd Edition tarrasque appears in the *Monstrous Compendium Volume Two*, and it is indistinguishable from the 1st Edition version. Only the head of the tarrasque is illustrated, but it is described as a scaly biped with two horns on its head, a lashing tail and a reflective carapace. The text makes it explicit that there is only one tarrasque per Prime Material Plane, and that the location of its resting place in the world is usually unknown as nature quickly obscures evidence of its presence. It is also suggested that the creature has an “elemental nature”, but this claim is not substantiated.



Monstrous Compendium Volume Two (1989)

Mechanically, this is the same tarrasque we saw in the *Monster Manual II*. Its size category has been upgraded to gargantuan (but it is still 50 feet long), and its 300 hp are noted as “approx. 70 hit dice”. It has the morale of a champion (15). During its once-per-turn rush, it now does double damage on all horn attacks and 4d10 of trampling damage. The rest of the creature’s statistics are the same as in 1st Edition.



Monstrous Manual (1993)

The picture in the *Monstrous Manual* shows the entire tarrasque and gives it claws that don’t look as feeble as they have in past depictions. The text is the same as in the *Monstrous Compendium Volume Two* but the tarrasque’s THAC0 has changed from 5 to -5, and a confusing note appended to the end of the page stating that “creatures with a minus THAC0 can only be hit on a 1”; according to *The Apocalypse Stone* this note is supposed to say that creatures with a negative THAC0 still miss on a roll of 1. *PHBR5: The Complete Psionics Handbook* confirms that the tarrasque remains totally immune to psionics in 2nd Edition.

Both *CR5: Deck of Encounters, Set Two* and *Dragon #226* include fake tarrasques. In the *Path of the Tarrasque* scenario in the *Deck of Encounters*, an underling has a farfetched plan to use staged tarrasque attacks to usurp a tyrannical duke. It suggests that the magic used to try to locate the tarrasque might awaken the real version, but then bizarrely goes on to say that this is “not recommended” for the scenario. *Dragon #226* contains an off-the-cuff NPC who claims, for reasons unknown, to have seen a tarrasque around the last corner.



1992 Trading Card #365 (1992)

The tarrasque appears on card #365 of the 1992 *Trading Card* set. This version has an almost humanoid face and a reddish-pink hide. The beast also features in the *Spellfire* card game, appearing as card #001 in the *Spellfire: Forgotten Realms* booster, and again as card #134 of the 4th Edition *Spellfire Starter Deck*. The artwork for the card was recycled from the *Forgotten Realms 1990 Calendar*, which is reproduced in the Forgotten Realms section below.

The tarrasque's last appearance in 2nd Edition is in the "end times" adventure *The Apocalypse Stone*. The heroes of the adventure may get roped into fighting the infamous "Horned Beast" as part of a series of tests. This particular tarrasque is wily enough to play dead if it is felled (but not *wished* dead) and will lie motionless until it has regenerated at least half of its hit points, at which point it continues its rampage.



The Apocalypse Stone (2000)

3rd Edition

The *Monster Manual* version of the tarrasque sticks fairly closely to the previous version. Bipedal, with scales, two horns, a tail and a hard carapace, the tarrasque is a little larger now; while it was previously described as 50 feet long, it is now 50 feet high and 70 feet long, and weighs about 130 tons. In 3rd Edition terms it is colossal in size. It still has only low intelligence (3), and is neutral in alignment. It remains unique, with the *Monster Manual* stating that only one tarrasque exists.

The activity cycle of the tarrasque is similar to before, but not identical. It stays dormant in a hidden location for 4-24 years, before waking up any beginning a repeated cycle of 1-3 days of activity followed by 6-24 months of torpor. After roughly a decade, the tarrasque rampages continuously for up to two weeks and then cycles back into a longer period of dormancy. While it is active, the tarrasque is an unpredictable engine of destruction, eating all plants, animals and humanoids in its path, and causing whole communities to flee in terror.

The origins of the tarrasque remain a matter of conjecture. The previous idea of it being an abomination released on the world by the gods is mentioned, and there is a new suggestion that evil wizards conspired with merciless elemental powers to create the tarrasque, which is likely an extension the “elemental nature” comment from the *Monstrous Compendium*.



Monster Manual (2000)

The majority of the *Monster Manual* entry is text explaining the tarrasque’s combat abilities. These are based on the earlier version, but codified a little better to match 3rd Edition rules. It has a *frightful presence* triggered by a charge or any attack; this leaves targets shaken if they fail a will save. Its speed is 20 ft., which is still slower than a typical human, but it retains the ability to *rush* at a speed of 150 ft. It can now do this once per minute, but doesn’t gain any special damage boosts while it does. It has an armor class of 35 and 48 hit dice (840 hit points). This is fewer hit dice but a lot more hit points than it previously had. According to the advancement line, it is possible for a tarrasque to have more than 48 hit dice.

The tarrasque still has six attacks: a bite (+57, 4d8+17 damage), two horns (+52, 1d10+8 damage), two claws (+52, 1d12+8) and a tail slap (+52, 3d8+8 damage). That’s a range of 68-157 damage, with an average of 112½ per round, if all attacks hit, which is nearly double the 1st/2nd Edition amounts. The creature no longer has a *sharpness* equivalent for its bite, instead it gets *augmented critical* on all of its attacks, causing triple damage on a natural roll of 18-20. This boosts the average damage by 30%, to 146 points per round if all attacks strike true. In addition, the tarrasque can now use an *improved grab* and *swallow whole* combination to swallow anything up to huge in size. A swallowed creature takes 4d8+14 damage (roughly half each from crushing and acid) and needs to do 50 points of internal damage to cut itself out of the tarrasque’s insides.

The defenses enjoyed by the tarrasque are considerable. It is immune to fire, poison and disease. It has spell resistance of 32, damage reduction of 25/+5 and regenerates 40 hit points per round. The reflective carapace deflects all rays, lines, cones and even *magic missiles* and the odds of a spell reflecting back at the caster has risen to 30%. Rubbing salt in the wound, the reflection chance is checked before the tarrasque’s spell resistance. The tarrasque is immune to unusual forms of damage, so it can recover even from *disintegration*, a *sword of wounding* or *mummy rot*. Such attacks can do no more than reduce it to -10 hit points. Even severed limbs reattach instantly if the tarrasque holds them in place. Killing the beast requires that it be reduced to -30 hit points and then be targeted by a *wish* or *miracle* spell, as before.

Rounding out the tarrasque are a bunch of feats (*blind-fight*, *combat reflexes*, *dodge*, *improved initiative*, *iron will*) and improved senses (the *scent* ability and a racial bonus on listen and spot). It has a climate/terrain entry of “any land” and a challenge rating of 20.

The *Monster Manual v.3.5* makes a number of updates to the tarrasque. The revised description is a bit less prosaic. The tarrasque is now said to be as tall as a five-story building, carrying itself like a bird of prey, leaning forwards and using its powerful, lashing tail for balance. It gets a minor hit point boost (from 840 to 858), and is now immune to energy drain and ability damage, as well as fire, poison and disease. The tarrasque’s damage reduction changes from 25/+5 to 15/epic, and there is a note added that its natural weapons count as epic weapons for the purpose of overcoming the damage resistance of opponents. The *frightful presence* ability is given a specific range (60 feet) and now has a much higher will save of 36 (instead of 26). The description of the *improved grab/swallow whole* abilities is updated to match the revised grappling rules.

The process for killing the tarrasque is substantially rewritten. All damage done to a tarrasque is now treated as nonlethal damage, and instant death spells now do only 868 hit points of nonlethal damage, which is 10 points more than its ordinary maximum. Only once the tarrasque has taken 868 points of nonlethal damage can it be *wished* or *miracled* dead. The 3.5 tarrasque gains seven additional feats (*alertness*, *awesome blow*, *cleave*, *great cleave*, *improved bull rush*, *power attack* and *toughness*) which, if the DM uses them effectively, could significantly boost the creature’s damage output.



Dragon #296 (2002)

The tarrasque received intermittent additional material in the pages of *Dragon* during the 3rd Edition era. *Dragon Annual #5* has an evil scheme outlined in which a plane-hopping traveler seeks help in getting rid of the tarrasque into a vast gate. This is secretly part of an evil plan to use the tarrasque to destroy the traveler's home world. *Tag Team Terror* in *Dragon #288* describes a lich who has sealed the tarrasque in a small gem using *trap the soul* and is now using that gem as a phylactery. The heroes need to destroy the phylactery to permanently defeat the lich, but doing so will release the tarrasque...

Although there are no detailed rules for playing a tarrasque character, the *Monsters with Class* article in *Dragon #293* pegs their effective character level at 80! *Dragon #296* on the other hand, introduces a prestige class appropriate for cultists who revere the tarrasque. The Wakers of the Beast is a cult dedicated to bringing about the end of the world by awakening the tarrasque. After experiencing a powerful dream of the tarrasque's destructive rampage, a cultist wakes with an innate ability to locate the sleeping monster. As they progress through the cult, they eventually experience an apotheosis in which they become partially physically transformed into a miniature version of the monstrous beast.



Dragon #359 (2007)

The tarrasque gets an *Ecology* article in *Dragon #359*. As befits the last in the series ever to see print, *The Ecology of the Tarrasque* was co-written by two of the most prolific contributors to the series: Ed Greenwood and Johnathan M. Richards. According to the *Ecology* article, a tarrasque could easily be mistaken for a dinosaur and moves much like a tyrannosaurus. Unlike the tyrannosaurus, however, the tarrasque's forearms are long enough to touch the ground even when it stands erect and it has been observed to "knuckle walk" like an ape.

The tarrasque's unique digestive system has three stomachs, which are described as the "most effective destructive engines in the multiverse". The creature's expanding gullet sends devoured objects down a spiral digestive tract into its belly. The hot uppermost stomach has durable, strong muscular walls lined with thousands of bony spines. The motion of the walls can shatter rocks, wood and bones; the knife-like spines saw through fibrous materials. The contents then proceed to the middle stomach, a churning cauldron of corrosive acid. This fluid is capable of stripping even magic from swallowed items. Whatever is not digested by the first two stomachs is melted by the third, which is a thrumming tube of great heat. The acidic slurry this stomach creates is boiled off and absorbed by the tarrasque. Although the tarrasque is capable of

digesting what it consumes extremely quickly, it stores most of the energy produced to sustain it during its long hibernation periods.



Dragon #359 (2007)

The *Ecology* makes the tarrasque's habit of hiding deep within the earth during its slumber periods a special ability. Following an extended rampage, if it has consumed sufficiently and is not engaged in battle, the tarrasque becomes drowsy. It uses the equivalent of *earth glide* to burrow back into the earth without disturbing the surrounding land. If it does not find a large enough cavern to lair in, it can remain in a state known to the dwarves as "arnstone", or "being at one with the stone". While in this state, the tarrasque's bodily processes slow down and it hibernates until it needs to seek nourishment once more. A tarrasque in an arnstone state is visible to other creatures passing through the ground, and is itself impassable to them.

If it is suspended in damp rock, from which it can absorb fluids, a tarrasque might stay in an arnstone state for up to 50 years. In dry rock, or if disturbed by earth tremors, changes in temperature, nearby movement or damage to the rock it is suspended in, the tarrasque will awaken sooner. A tarrasque awakens quickly, taking only 1-5 rounds to rouse itself. Once awake, it behaves somewhat unpredictably. It might attack the source of the disturbance, flee at high speed until it can revert to its hibernation, or simply wander off languidly.



Dragon #359 (2007)

Although it is not an evil creature, the tarrasque is driven by its insatiable hunger. Barely more intelligent than an animal, it sees all other creatures as food. It also sees almost everything else as food. The creature's immunities and regeneration make it effectively fearless and it never retreats from battle. The tarrasque feels a strong sense of annoyance towards creatures capable of flight, since they are able to elude its reach and stomach.

The *Ecology* article concludes with an advanced tarrasque. This has a challenge rating of 30, and a whopping 1,538 hit points (78 hit dice). It is intended to challenge even epic-level adventurers.

4th Edition

While the *Monstrous Compendium* and 3rd Edition *Monster Manual* both refer to the tarrasque as an abomination, the 4th Edition *Monster Manual* goes one step further and makes the tarrasque an “abomination”, a specific category of monster. This is a concept first explored in the *Epic Level Handbook*, although that source doesn't include the tarrasque as an abomination. In 4th Edition, abominations were created during the ancient war between the gods and the primordials which serves as the backdrop for the edition's lore. They are living weapons; some, like the tarrasque, are enormous. Others are dangerous because there are legions of them. As well as the tarrasque, the *Monster Manual* counts astral stalkers, atropal, blood fiends, and phanes as abominations.

In the specific entry for the tarrasque, there isn't much more lore provided. It is described as the embodiment of wanton destruction, wading into battle to obliterate all life created by the gods. As in the past, it sleeps within the world for much of its existence, emerging from time-to-time to rampage across the continent. Unlike in previous editions, there is no way to permanently kill the tarrasque. If reduced to zero hit points, the beast sinks back into the ground, to begin its years-long slumber once more. It is hinted in an ancient text that to kill the tarrasque it would first need to be coaxed or tricked into somehow leaving the world.



Monster Manual (2008)

The 4th Edition tarrasque has two action points, which it uses as soon as it enters combat to make additional attacks. Its main attack is its bite, a +34 attack which does 1d12+16 damage and 15 ongoing damage until the target saves. It can combine this with a *trample* during its move (+33 attack, 1d12+16 damage and the target is knocked prone), or it can use *fury of the tarrasque* to combine a bite with a *rending bite* (same as a bite but with 2d12 extra damage) or a tail slap (+32 attack, 3d12+16 damage and the target is knocked prone). If there are multiple targets in range, the tarrasque can instead go into a *frenzy* and make bite attacks against all creatures within 3 squares. It is tricky to compare this tarrasque's damage output in a round to its ancestors, but using an action point it could inflict between 68-123 points of damage (or an average of 95½ points) on a single opponent. The tarrasque is an *elder of annihilation* which means that all of its attacks ignore resistances, something particularly beneficial in 4th Edition.

Although it can no longer be permanently killed using a *wish*, just reducing this version to 0 hit points is a challenge. It starts with 1420 hit points, an armor class of 32 and resistance of 10 against all damage, but it no longer regenerates. This tarrasque moves faster than previously, with walking, burrowing and climbing speeds of 8. It has blindsight, and is immune to *charm* and *fear*. Like its predecessors, the tarrasque is unaligned. Unlike its predecessors, this version of the tarrasque has a way of dealing with flying foes. It exudes an *earthbinding aura* which reduces any creature within 200 feet to a maximum altitude of 20 feet and a maximum speed of 1, bringing it neatly in range of the abomination.



Dragon #418 (2012)

Dragon #418 is a tarrasque-heavy issue of the online magazine, with *History Check: The Tarrasque* and *The End Is Nigh! Followers of the Tarrasque* appearing back to back. The *History Check* expands on the 4th Edition origin story of the tarrasque as a creation from the time of the war between the primordials and the gods. The creators of the tarrasque are revealed as the archomental otherwise known as the Elemental Princes. They formed an alliance during the Dawn War, and in one final act of spite before their defeat, created an abomination of unquenchable hunger: the tarrasque. Each of the Elemental Princes contributed something to the beasts. Imix the Fire Lord gave it burning internal heat and murderous energy. Cryonax the Bringer of

Endless Winter and Ogrémoch the Stone Tyrant contributed its immortal endurance. Olydra the Mistress of the Black Tide and Yan-C-Bin the Great Cloud provided the tarrasque's inexorable wrath. It is suggested that tarrasque's *earthbinding aura* is also a gift from Yan-C-Bin. Interestingly, two heretofore unknown Elemental Princes are mentioned, although not by name. One was a force of acid and the other a creature of bone and blade, but they did not survive the process of creating the tarrasque.

After its creation, the tarrasque incubated for centuries in the elemental core of the world, before one day awakening to inflict the wrath of its primordial creators on the works of the gods. The archomental had intended for the tarrasque to be a beast with malevolent intelligence and cunning, but it was instead tainted by the mindless rage that characterized its creators. The name for the beast is said to be derived from an elvish word meaning "unstoppable" but it has long since lost its original meaning and is now used only to refer to the monster. When it awakens to begin one of its periodic rampages, the tarrasque is indiscriminate about what it destroys—drow cities, human realms, tribes of demon-worshiping gnolls, illithid sects, giants clans—all are seen simply as food by the mighty tarrasque.

The *History Check* posits that it is only the tarrasque's cycle of rampage followed by hibernation that prevents the beast from destroying the world. According to this article, and contradicting the earlier *Ecology*, it takes time for the tarrasque to turn everything it eats into energy. Thus after each rampage, it must undergo a period of sleep during which it powers up, ready for the next waking cycle. If reduced to zero hit points, the tarrasque doesn't die, it just triggers a premature sleep cycle and descends into its elemental torpor to avoid the threat of further injury. When it emerges from the ground for each cycle of activity, it seems to do so in a random location, and not where it was when it sank into the ground. One explanation for this is that when a sleeping tarrasque is disturbed by miners or Underdark explorers, it does not always rouse itself in response. It is as likely to simply move deeper into the ground, away from the disturbance.

The *History Check* describes various cults dedicated to reverence of the tarrasque. Most of these come to a natural end when they are devoured by the awakening monster, but some, such as the Reckoners, endure. The Reckoners was founded by a deva who rose again after being slain by the tarrasque. This cult has found a way of harnessing the negative energy left in the wake of the tarrasque's rampage for its own foul purposes.

The fact that the tarrasque can only be permanently destroyed by first removing it from the mortal world is highlighted. It is also clarified that the 4th Edition tarrasque is unknown on any of the other planes, including the Elemental Chaos. It was bound to the Prime Material Plane by the primordials, and has remained so ever since. The *History Check* article notes that the tarrasque is gradually changing, growing steadily more powerful through the ages, and that the periods of both its dormancy and activity cycles are extending. Does this mean that at some point the tarrasque will permanently awaken, never to sleep again? It is said that the Elder Elemental Eye was the hidden hand behind the alliance of Elemental Princes during the Dawn War. Could the apocalypse brought on by an ever more powerful tarrasque have been the goal of the Elder Elemental Eye all along?

The second article in *Dragon #418, The End Is Nigh!* focusses on the Reckoners, the enduring cult of the tarrasque mentioned above. Members of the cult are corrupted by the tarrasque's destructive impulses and engage in campaigns of murder and destruction while they wait for the beast's next rampage, when they are likely consumed. The cult perversely asserts that the tarrasque is a primal spirit of justice and punishment

whose task it is to cleanse the earth of those unworthy. There are thousands of Reckoners spread throughout the world and hundreds of those have a psychic connection to the tarrasque.

Scholars believe that the cult draws its power not directly from the tarrasque, but from the residual shadow energy that remains at the sites of the creature's attack. The Reckoners build shrines to the tarrasque in areas it has attacked, to leverage the residual energy. Those living on such blighted lands absorb this energy and become corrupted. The cult's founder, the deva Thaeras, was corrupted in this way some three hundred years ago. He learned to control the energy left in the tarrasque's wake and to infect others with his particular madness. The Reckoners now warmly welcome all such doomed souls into their fold. Thaeras remains the ultimate leader of the cult, although a human wizard named Loman Farvel is now responsible for developing most of the Reckoners' schemes. They preach their apocalyptic beliefs and develop grandiose schemes to bring down civilization. If these schemes fail, they are quite content to engage in random acts of murder and mayhem.

Nearly any intelligent creature might join the Reckoners and the article provides some themed abilities which can be added to members of the cult, including *abomination's frenzy* (a once per encounter attack against all enemies with reach), *furious tail* (a ghostly tail attack), *rending jaws* (an artificial widening of a cultist's fang-filled jaws to bite through almost anything) and *scion of annihilation* (supercharged damage which overcomes any form of damage reduction). When the tarrasque eventually wakes, the Reckoners gather to join it in battle, using their abilities against any who would try to oppose the beast's rampage. The article provided a statistics block for a tarrasque Reckoner, treating one as a high-level minion.

The article also presents what is effectively a *D&D Essentials* version of the tarrasque. It is almost the same as the *Monster Manual* version, but has been tweaked slightly to make for a more interesting opponent. The tarrasque's immunities are extended to a wider variety of conditions, including being knocked prone, made dazed or being dominated. Its attacks don't only ignore resistance, they now specifically cannot be reduced in any way. The creature's *bite* attack does more damage (3d10+31) and causes the target to be knocked prone. The *tail slap* is now a standard action, doing slightly more damage (3d10+31), and does not need to recharge. The *trample* attack does significantly more damage (5d12+16), as does any attack made as part of its *frenzy*. Finally, it gains a powerful immediate reaction; each time it takes damage it can make two melee basic attacks. In return for all of these buffs to the monster's attacks, it has slightly fewer hit points (1,140 instead of 1,420).

5th Edition

The tarrasque in the 5th Edition *Monster Manual* gets only a few paragraphs of lore. This is a summary of the key points from previous editions. It remains a scaly biped, fifty feet tall and seventy feet long, that carries itself like a bird of prey using its tail for balance. It weighs hundreds of tons and has a maw large enough to swallow almost anything. The tarrasque is driven by constant hunger and can devour whole towns when it awakes from the dormant state it spends much of its time in. Quite when and why it will next awaken is a cosmic mystery and some cultures believe it has something to do with divine judgment and wrath. As always, it is understood that there is only one tarrasque on the Material Plane.

Mechanically, the tarrasque is gargantuan in size, and is classified as a monstrosity. It is also labeled as a "titan" one of only five monsters (so far) to get this 5th Edition tag (the others are the astral dreadnought, the atropal, the empyrean and the kraken). It has an armor class of 25, a speed of 40 ft, and 33 hit dice (676 hit

points). It has blindsight (120 ft.) and is unaligned. As before, it has only animal intelligence (3) and it neither speaks nor understands any language.



Monster Manual (2014)

The tarrasque has a wide range of damage and condition immunities: fire, poison, charmed, frightened, paralyzed and all bludgeoning, piercing and slashing damage from non-magical attacks. It has *magic resistance* which gives it advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects. Even if it does fail a save, it can use *legendary resistance* three times per day to automatically succeed instead. That's assuming the *reflective carapace* doesn't simply repel the spell, which it does for *magic missiles*, line spells and all spells requiring a ranged attack roll. There is a 1 in 6 chance that instead of being harmlessly reflected, the spell will instead bounce back at the caster. This tarrasque, like the 4th Edition version, does not have regeneration.

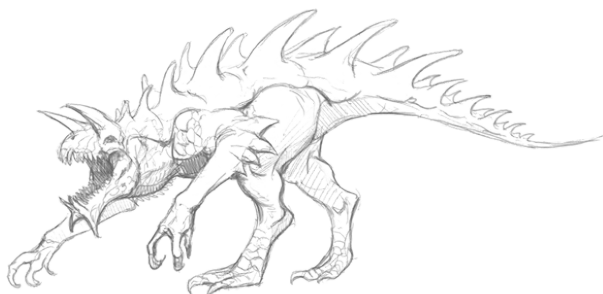


Monster Manual (2014)

The tarrasque has *multiattack*, which allows it to use all of the following on its turn: *frightful presence* (creatures within 120 feet become frightened until they make a saving throw), a bite attack (+19 to hit, 4d12+10 damage), two claw attacks (+19 to hit, 4d8+10 damage), one attack with its horns (+19 to hit, 4d10+10 damage) and a tail attack (+19 to hit, 4d6+10 damage). The bite attack can grapple a target causing it to be restrained. If it has a victim so restrained, the tarrasque can substitute a swallow for the bite attack which inflicts bite damage and moves the target to inside the tarrasque. Once there, it takes 16d6 acid

damage per round unless it manages to do 60 points of damage to the tarrasque in one turn, which causes the beast to regurgitate all swallowed creatures.

It is a legendary creature, so the tarrasque can take three legendary actions during each combat round at the end of another creature's turn. These options are to move half its speed, make an extra claw or tail attack, or, if it uses two legendary actions at once, it can bite or swallow. Combining these options with its normal attack regime, the 5th Edition tarrasque does between 112-352 points of damage, or an average of 232 per round.



Monster Manual (2014)

If we compare the average damage from 1st to 5th Edition, assuming all of the tarrasque's attacks succeed, we get: 64½ (1st), 86½ (2nd), 146 (3rd), 95½ (4th), 232 (5th). Looking at the maximum damage per round, we instead have 118 (1st), 158 (2nd), 204 (3rd), 123 (4th), 352 (5th). With the exception of 4th Edition, there is a clear jump with each new edition of the game. Looking at hit points, we have 300 (1st and 2nd), 858 (3rd), 1,420 (4th), 676 (5th), indicating a very significant spike for 4th Edition before 5th Edition drops back down to between 2nd Edition and 3rd Edition. It should be noted however, that in the most recent two editions, the tarrasque does not regenerate hit points, which makes a significant difference.

While it compares reasonably to its ancestors in terms of offensive and defensive capabilities, the 5th Edition tarrasque feels rather bland. There is no special requirement to kill it, nor does it automatically sink back into the land once defeated. This tarrasque is just a sack of hit points. Admittedly, a hard-to-hit sack with a lot of hit points, but still not much more than an exceptionally powerful dinosaur.



Dungeons & Dragons Adventures Outlined Coloring Book (2018)

The 5th Edition era is notable for the number of spin off products aimed at children. These include the *Adventures Outlined Coloring Book*, which finishes off with an illustration of a rampaging tarrasque, and *Beasts & Behemoths*, one of the books in the *A Young Adventurer's Guide* series, which features the tarrasque on its cover.



Beasts & Behemoths: A Young Adventurer's Guide (2020)

Beasts & Behemoths includes a summary of the tarrasque's key characteristics and background, but in a style suited to slightly younger readers. It manages to maintain a good sense of humour as it does so, with lines like: "It is widely believed that only a single tarrasque exists in all the realms. No one wants to be proven wrong about this." Helpfully, the two-page spread also contains a handy size comparison showing just how large a tarrasque is compared to a human.



Beasts & Behemoths: A Young Adventurer's Guide (2020)

Tarrasque variations

The original *Manual of the Planes* hints that the Plane of Water has its own version of the tarrasque. The Guardian Beast in *Reverse Dungeon* takes on the form of a false tarrasque, which is identical to an ordinary tarrasque except that it is one-fifth the size. The adventure *Legend of the Silver Skeleton*, published on the Wizards of the Coast website, has a clockwork tarrasque, which is a huge animated object. Two editions later, there is another clockwork tarrasque in *Dragon+* #17, but this one is just a stuffed toy animal with hidden gears given as a present by Nicholas the Gift-Giver in a Christmas-themed article.

Two articles in the *Elite Opponents* series of articles on the Wizards of the Coast website introduce tarrasque variants. The first ([The Tarrasque](#)), covers the tarrasque of legend, the five-headed pyrotarrasque, and the spellwarped woodling tarrasque. The tarrasque of legend is intended to buff the creature to provide a Godzilla-like threat in a d20 Modern campaign. The five-headed pyrotarrasque uses the multi-headed template from *Savage Species* to give the beast five fire-breathing heads. The spellwarped woodling variation is suitable for a tarrasque living in a deep, dark forest; when it hibernates it resembles an ancient tree.

If five heads are not enough for you, the second article ([Creatures with a Lot of Heads](#)) presents a thirty-headed tarrasque. This is, as you might expect, quite over the top. As well as its cranial excesses, this beast has 4,947 hit points, an armor class of 69, and a spell resistance of 52. Given that each head has a bite (+121, at least 4d8+20 damage) and two horn attacks (+120, 1d10+10 damage), the listed challenge rating of 40 seems like it could even be a bit on the low side.

Dragon #418 hints at the possibility of an undead tarrasque roaming the Barrens of the Abyss. Similarly, *Lost Laboratory of Kwalish* includes a rumor that the tarrasque slumbering beneath the Barrier Peaks is undead.

Tarrasque relatives

Dragon #175 suggests that the tarrasque might be a descendant of the ankylosaur, but this seems unlikely and contradicts what we know about its magical origins.

The kadtanach features in the adventure *Beast of Burden* in *Dungeon* #100. The 100 foot tall beast is omnivorous and has a placid temperament. It can usually be found roaming the Wilderness of the Beastlands, constantly eating, but was transported to the Prime Material Plane by a cabal seeking to turn it into the ultimate merchant caravan. It has since come under the control of a group of enterprising gnolls who are using it as a mobile siege engine. Kadtanach is gnoll for “too massive to see all at once”. Although the kadtanach lacks the magical abilities of the tarrasque, it seems likely that it is related.



Kadtanach, *Dungeon* #100 (2003)

Tarrasque parts

In its original *Monster Manual II* appearance, the carapace, blood and underbelly are all described as valuable parts of the tarrasque. The shell can be treated with acid and then heated in a furnace to give dozens of valuable diamonds (10-100 worth 1000 gp each). When mixed with the tarrasque's blood and iron obtained from a meteor, the underbelly hide can be forged into up to four +5 shields by experienced dwarven smiths. The *Monstrous Compendium Volume Two* adds that it takes two years to make each such shield and mentions that the dwarves won't work for free. Sadly for tarrasque killers, from 3rd Edition onwards the tarrasque's shell no longer contained diamonds.



Dragon #418 (2012)

The horn of a tarrasque is a component for a *potion of invulnerability* according to *Better Living Through Alchemy* in *Dragon #130*. It should, however, not be made into a musical horn; *Song and Silence* indicates that such a horn succeeds only in attracting the tarrasque itself. *Treasures of the Wilds* (in *Dragon #137*) suggests that the whole body of a dead tarrasque might fetch as much as 50,000-100,000 gold coins, while *PHRB14: The Complete Barbarian's Handbook* gives the price of the carapace as 20,000 gp and the value of the tarrasque's underbelly as 5,000 gp.

The tarrasque's pituitary gland (or more specifically, part of the epidermis of the gland) is required to enchant one of the material components for the 12th-level spell *Karsus's avatar*, as detailed in *Netheril: Empire of Magic*. As we'll see later, the quest to find the components for this spell form the story of the adventure *How the Mighty are Fallen*. Exactly which part of the tarrasque is needed for the spell is muddled by *Powers & Pantheons*. That source suggests that it is the tarrasque's blood that is necessary to prepare the spell.

It seems unlikely that anyone would want to dine on tarrasque, but there is that price given for the creature's underbelly, and in *EPIC5-3: Shadow Storm*, Garl Glittergold jokes about "rainbow slaad and tarrasque pie". There is also a rotting carcass of a tarrasque which something or someone appears to have eaten much of in the *Adventurers League* scenario *CCC-GSP02-03: Maladomini Unleashed*. In *CCC-GSP04-01: Devil King High School Year One* we learn that it is possible to purchase freshly killed tarrasques from a high-end black market in Minauros. After ten days of roasting and seasoning with rare herbs and spices the flesh becomes tender enough to remove without a knife. It is said to be full of umami flavor and melts in the mouth.

Tarrasques and other monsters

The relationship between tarrasques to other creatures can be summed up as "prey" and "food", but according to *Monster Manual Update: Grell in Dungeon #192*, grells show deference to the tarrasque as a "great devourer".

Tarrasques and gods

The *Monstrous Compendium Volume Two* suggests that the tarrasque is an abomination unleashed by dark arts and/or elder gods to punish the world. It also speculates a link between the tarrasque and the Elemental Princes of Evil. The records of the last days of a long-extinct civilization speak of a "great reptilian punisher sent by the gods to end the world".

The 3rd Edition *Monster Manual* repeats the claim of the tarrasque possibly having been unleashed by ancient gods to punish all of nature, and in the 4th Edition *Monster Manual*, this is canonized by the classification of the tarrasque as an abomination—a living weapon created during the Dawn War between the gods and the primordials. As noted earlier, *Dragon #418* supports the claim that the Elemental Princes were the creators of the tarrasque. The article *Princes of Elemental Good* in the late 3rd Edition *Dragon #353*, references a legend that Sunnis, Prince of Good Earth Creatures, is responsible for the tarrasque's periodic slumber. Unable to destroy the beast, she used an artifact called the *sands of slumber* to force the tarrasque into dormancy for most of its existence.

The tarrasque also seems to be entangled in the stories of the gods of the giants. In *Monster Mythology*, the tarrasque is one of the possible creatures that Hiatea must overcome to prove herself to her father Annam. In *Volo's Guide to Monsters*, Skoraeus Stonebones is said to have assisted Stronmaus find the chain-tunnels that allowed him to pull the tarrasque down to the bed of the ocean where it would finally drown. *Storm King's Thunder* suggests that there might be a stone giant thane trying to awaken the tarrasque.

Tarrasques and magic

As noted above, various parts of the tarrasque's body can be transformed into powerful magic shields by the right smiths. In *Night Below*, a group of dao have an almost-completed *shield +5* made from chitinous tarrasque plate. The dao slew the dwarves who were making it before it was completed, and a further 1d4+4 weeks of labor by a master dwarven craftsman will be required to finish it.

Adventurer's Vault lists tarrasque plate armor as an option for masterwork armor. It is designed to emulate the impenetrable hide of the gigantic beast and consists of hundreds of nodules packed between thin metal layers. It has an armor bonus of +12 and resistance of 5 to all damage.

Destroying magic items by feeding them to the tarrasque is a common theme. The *Dungeon Master's Guide II* has a glorious full page illustration of Jozan and the other iconic 3rd Edition characters dropping the *Wand of*

Orcus into the maw of a tarrasque, presumably to destroy it. It suggests that this method of destruction could work for a variety of artifacts. *Spellbound* suggests that one way to destroy the evil *Death Moon Orb* artifact is for it to be devoured by a tarrasque. *Dragon* #418 lists the *Fang of Baator*, the *Ebon Band* and the *Talisman of Ahrjez* as magical devices that have been destroyed inside the tarrasque, and suggests that even the *Demonomicon* or the *Hand of Vecna* could be thus ended. The 5th Edition *Dungeon Master's Guide* agrees that one of the ways to destroy an artifact is for it to be swallowed and digested by a tarrasque.



Dungeon Master's Guide II (2005)

The *totem deck of many things* contains a tarrasque card. The effect of this card, if drawn, is that the next successful attack the character makes is a killing blow, unless the target has a higher level or hit dice and makes a saving throw vs. death. This deck is described in *Dragon* #271.



Totem Deck, *Dragon* #271 (2000)

One of the *teeth of Dahlver-Nah*, detailed in *Tasha's Cauldron of Everything*, is linked to the story of the last tarrasque and it takes the form of a jagged sliver of a tarrasque tooth. If sown in the ground, the tooth summons a tarrasque, if implanted in the mouth, the bearer of the tooth deals double damage to objects and structures, but runs the risk of flying into an uncontrolled murderous rage upon taking significant damage.

According to *Infernal Machine Rebuild*, one of the effects of the *Infernal Machine of Lum the Mad* is to possibly summon a tarrasque whenever the person activating the machine meets a particular type of creature. The summoned tarrasque rampages for up to an hour and then vanishes.

Icewind Dale: Rime of the Frostmaiden includes a *scroll of tarrasque summoning* which does exactly what you might expect. The summoned creature is hostile to all creatures other than itself and vanishes once reduced to 0 hit points. The adventure takes care to cover the likely impact of a tarrasque let loose in the region in which *Rime of the Frostmaiden* is set. Hint: it's not good. The same source details a sentient *professor orb* that goes by the name Professor Skant. One of its areas of expertise is the tarrasque, and it is quite happy to give somewhat patronizing lectures on the topic to anyone prepared to listen.

There are also non-magical sources of tarrasque knowledge. *Essential Works*, an article in *Dungeon* #122, describes a number of rare books that might be found in a library. One of these is *Turtho's Chronicles*, which is worth 150 gp to a collector. The book, consisting of a number of crudely stitched together, water-stained pages between crumbling slate covers, details the signs and portents which herald the imminent arrival of the tarrasque. A tarrasque-worshipping cult known as the Chosen of Chaos has destroyed most copies of this tome, and continues to hunt anyone who still has a copy.

The article *Polymorphology* in *Dragon* #280 suggests that the tarrasque's form is a good choice to change into. It notes that most of the creature's combat abilities are extraordinary rather than supernatural, so are gained when assuming its shape.

Magic of Incarnum has two tarrasque-theme souldmelds: *dread carapace* and *totem avatar*. *Dread carapace* allows a totemist to emulate the tarrasque's power in combat, providing boosts to damage and potentially an increased threat range, temporary speed boost, spell resistance or the ability to cause those around you to become shaken. The heart bind of the *totem avatar* has a connection to the tarrasque; it provides a totemist with damage reduction.

The Art of Binding: Warlock Vestiges in *Dragon* #383 presents a number of new spells for a vestige pact warlock. One of these is the *vestige of the earthen maker*, which purports to draw on the power of the forgotten creator of the tarrasque. This is a level 29 daily spell which deals at least 3d10 damage as well as 10 ongoing damage; this damage ignores all resistances and immunities, which makes it particularly powerful in 4th Edition terms.

According to *Magic of Faerûn*, even though Herald's Holdfast is not a true *mythal*, the magic of this location on the southern tip of the Moonwood is strong enough to protect against various invaders, including the tarrasque.

Tarrasque FAQs

Dragon magazine readers have had some strange questions about the tarrasque. Here are the paraphrased *Sage Advice* questions and answers from *Dragon* #142, *Dragon* #180, *Dragon* #183, *Dragon* #192, *Dragon* #250 and *Dragon* #271, all dealing with the 1st and 2nd Edition versions of the tarrasque:

Q: Does the tarrasque really have one attack doing only 1-2 damage?

A: No, that's a misprint. It should be 1-12.

Q: Does the use of its horns depend on the once-per-turn rush?

A: No, it can attack with its horns without rushing.

Q: Does the tarrasque really need to be reduced to -30 hit points and have a *wish* used to kill it?

A: Yes.

Q: Does the tarrasque get a save against the *wish*?

A: No.

Q: Might the *wish* go wrong as wishes to kill creatures sometimes do?

A: No.

Q: Does acid hurt the tarrasque?

A: Yes, but you still need the *wish*.

Q: If you use a *sphere of annihilation* to kill the tarrasque, is the *wish* still necessary?

A: Yes. Also, extremely large creatures aren't necessarily killed by a *sphere of annihilation* so you might just make it mad.

Q: What happens if a tarrasque is petrified, does that kill it?

A: No, it doesn't die and eventually unpetrifies itself after 4d4 years (or as soon as the DM wants).

Q: What about a *sword of wounding*, does that work on a tarrasque?

A: No, it can regenerate that damage normally. The wound bleeds for a maximum of four rounds.

Q: Can you *shapechange* a tarrasque into a bunny and eat it?

A: No, *shapechange* only works on the caster.

Q: Okay then, what about using *polymorph other* to turn a tarrasque into a bunny?

A: That works, but it keeps its hit points, armor class, regeneration and bite and kick attacks.

Q: But those aren't the normal rules for *polymorph other*! Why does it keep its armor class and bite attack?

A: Whoops. In that case, a polymorphed tarrasque keeps its armor class because it is special. It keeps its *teeth of sharpness* as a bunny because we've all seen *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*.



Knights about to encounter a polymorphed tarrasque

Unusual questions about the tarrasque did not stop at 2nd Edition. Here are some more, paraphrased from the *Ask Wizards* archive on the Wizards of the Coast website. Some of these answers were crowdsourced from fans, rather than being official responses:

Q: What happens if a tarrasque meets another tarrasque?

A: According to the 3rd Edition *Monster Manual*, only one exists, so this isn't something to worry about.

Q: What if someone time travels and brings one back to meet itself?

A: Since there is only ever one tarrasque, moving it from the past means it would cease to exist in the present, but ignoring that they would fight to a stalemate or until one fell unconscious and the other one got bored and left.

Q: Is the tarrasque female?

A: The tarrasque does not have a gender.

Q: Can a *ring of three wishes* be used to wish that: 1. a tarrasque did have a discernible gender, 2. there was a second tarrasque of the opposite gender, and 3. that they would mate?

A: While a *wish* could probably give the tarrasque a gender, it isn't powerful enough to create a second one, otherwise there would be a lot more of them in the world, created by high-level wizards.

Q: Can a *rod of rulership* be used to force a tarrasque to eat 100 *vials of icy sheets* (a magic item from Frostburn that does 6d6 damage if accidentally swallowed) to reduce it to -30 hit points?

A: No, a *rod of rulership* can't make the tarrasque do something contrary to its nature, which is to kill everything around it. But if the *vials* were being carried by someone and you tricked the tarrasque into swallowing that person, that would probably work.

Q: Since hit points lost to suffocation aren't regenerated, can a tarrasque be killed by sealing it in a cube made up of *walls of force*?

A: The tarrasque would eventually suffocate and be reduced to -10 hit points, but it wouldn't be dead and would get up again once it could breathe.

Q: Can a *sphere of annihilation* kill a tarrasque in 3rd Edition?

A: Still no.

Even in 5th Edition, people continue to have questions about tarrasques. These are paraphrased from the [D&D Sage Advice](#) archives:

Q: Do tarrasque claws count as magical weapons?

A: No.

Q: If I manage to hit a tarrasque with a *wand of viscid globs* will it be restrained for an hour?

A: Yes.

Q: Does the artificer's *repulsion shield* work against a tarrasque?

A: Yes.

Q: Does the open hand monk's ability to knock creatures prone work on a tarrasque.

A: Yes, but the tarrasque can use *legendary resistance* if it fails the save.

Q: In a fight between a tarrasque and the Walking Statues of Waterdeep, who wins?

A: In a one-on-one battle, the tarrasque. In a fight between all of the Statues and the tarrasque, the Statues.

Council of Wyrms

Sleeping Dragon in *Dungeon* #48 is an introductory adventure for the Council of Wyrms setting. In this adventure, the dracolich Infernis seeks to summon the tarrasque using the *talon of final destruction*. In addition to summoning it, this magic item allows its wielder to give the tarrasque a single command. The tarrasque will follow this order for one activity cycle (1d6+8 days) and is then equally likely to become dormant or turn on its summoner. The goal of this adventure is to foil Infernis's plans, so the tarrasque only shows up if things go horribly wrong.

Dark Sun

Although the tarrasque doesn't feature in any Dark Sun books, it is the focus of the *Dark Sun: Wake of the Ravager* video game. At the climax of the game, the story's villain, the Lord Warrior, releases the tarrasque. The heroes must seal the beast in the *Urn of Utatci* to succeed.



Dark Sun: Wake of the Ravager (1994), image from [cure888](#)

The 4th Edition *Dark Sun Campaign Setting* implies that Athas does not have a tarrasque, as it substitutes *Tarrasque plate armor* (from *Adventurer's Vault*) with *Braxat lord shell armor*. Perhaps this is because the only tarrasque was beaten in *Wake of the Ravager*?

Dragonlance

According to *DL16: World of Krynn*, Lord Soth keeps a pet tarrasque in a cupboard-sized room in Dargaard Keep. Perhaps understandably, the 3rd Edition *Bestiary of Krynn, Revised* relegates the tarrasque to non-canonical for Krynn, including it on a list of monsters not found in the Dragonlance setting. The *Dragonlance Nexus* has an [interview](#) with the tarrasque from Dargaard Keep. It does not respond well to questions about canon.

Eberron

The introduction to *Secrets of Xen'drik* states that the tarrasque has lain in torpor beneath the Iceflow Sea for over forty thousand years. It is imprisoned by wards placed by the giant wizards of the Sul'at League and all it would take is one careless word for the wards to be shattered, releasing the creature on the unsuspecting world.

The adventure *EXP-9: Endgame*, which is part of the *Xen'drik Expeditions* organized play campaign, ignores *Secrets of Xen'drik*, and places the tarrasque in the waters near Stormreach. In this adventure it is used as a weapon to attack Stormreach by a group known as the Table. Most of the tarrasque's involvement in the scenario takes place in cutscenes, including one where a huge airship divebombs the creature and both are consumed in a fiery explosion. There are statistics provided for this tarrasque, which is a spellwarped variation, but the PCs are not expected to engage with it during the adventure.

Dragons of Eberron suggests instead that the tarrasque could be an inhabitant of Argonnessen, but doesn't give a particular location for it. *Exploring Eberron* posits that the tarrasque could be one of the kar'lassa: massive, immortal monstrosities that lie deep below the surface of the Thunder Sea. It goes on to say that the tarrasque is small for a kar'lassa, most of which are miles long in size.

Forgotten Realms

There is a tarrasque encounter as one of the tests of Orcus in *H2: The Mines of Bloodstone* and the creature's lair is one of the locations mentioned in the Realm of Orcus in *H4: The Throne of Bloodstone*, but the first visual appearance of the tarrasque in the Forgotten Realms was in a Jeff Butler painting for the *Forgotten Realms 1990 Calendar*. This illustration was reprinted in the *The Art of the Advanced Dungeons & Dragons* game a few months later. According to [Butler](#) there is no great story behind the picture, he was simply intrigued by the tarrasque and also wanted to paint a giant gorilla.



Forgotten Realms 1990 Calendar (1989)

The next major appearance of a tarrasque in the Realms is in the *Dragonreach Saga* told across issues #5-#9 of the Forgotten Realms comic series published by DC. The protagonists of the story (the crew of the *Realms Master* skyship) are asked by a bronze dragon named Murilantilathenes to find out what is killing off the great dragons of the north. This turns out to be an enigmatic being known as Outcast, who wields a

powerful staff, and is capable of summoning a tarrasque and using it as a steed. The story's heroes are eventually able to overcome the monster, and this causes the Outcast to vanish. Exactly who or what the Outcast is, or why it could control a tarrasque is never explained.



Forgotten Realms comics #7 and #8 (1990)

The earliest encounter with a Faerûnian tarrasque in an adventure is in *How the Mighty are Fallen*. Set in the past, in the final days of Netheril, the adventurers are hired to obtain some exotic spell components by the archwizard Tarsus. One of these is the pituitary gland of a tarrasque. This spongy organ weighs 17 pounds and takes up about three large backpacks of space. According to the adventure, a magic weapon can be used to remove the gland from the sleeping tarrasque without waking it up. The tarrasque in question is located in a mound to the west of Yeoman's Loft. *Netheril: Empire of Magic* records this as being in the Purple Mountains.



How the Mighty are Fallen (1996)

Elminster's Ecologies lists the tarrasque in the lower cave encounter tables for the Storm Horns and Thunder Peaks. It also suggests that a tarrasque sleeps below the “Secret Place in the Sands” in the southern part of the Sword in the Anauroch desert. This may well be the same tarrasque that had its pituitary gland removed in *How the Mighty are Fallen*, since the locations match up.

Polyhedron #109 documents the refusal of a Ravens Bluff city magistrate to permit a “Tarrasque Room” building expansion without the benefit of an environmental impact statement. In *Waterdeep: Dragon Heist* the hold of the ship *Hellraiser* contains an enormous tarrasque puppet designed for five puppeteers. Card #53 of the *Dice Masters: Battle for Faerûn* game features a tarrasque. The card uses a picture by Craig J. Spearing, which is remarkably similar to his *Dragon* #418 cover and also appeared in the 5th Edition *Dungeon Master's Guide*.



Dice Masters: Battle for Faerûn (2015)

Tarrasques (of a sort) feature in several *Adventurers League* titles. In *CCC-QCC2018-01: Of Gods and Monsters*, Doctor Juhal's Carnival of Curiosities are displaying a “tarrasque” as part of their traveling show. However, this turns out to only be a dragon turtle. In *CCC-BWM-007-01: The Beast Beneath*, a sleeping creature beneath Hillsfar begins to stir, causing earthquakes. This monster, which it turns out is a mutated tarrasque, gets loose in *CCC-BMW-007-03: The Beast Unleashed* and is—most likely—dealt with by just *wishing* that it was someplace else. A stuffed tarrasque doll is one of the carnival prizes in *CCC-RCC-01-06: The Handfasting*, and

the bouncers in *The Tarrasque at Twilight* tavern in Gallard wear fanciful tarrasque masks, as detailed in *The Border Kingdoms* and CCC-HERO-BK03-03: *A Lute Strung Double*.



Magic: the Gathering: Adventures in the Forgotten Realms (2021)

The most recent appearances of the tarrasque in the Forgotten Realms are in the *Adventures in the Forgotten Realms* and *Commander Legends: Battle for Baldur's Gate* card sets for *Magic: the Gathering*. On *Adventures in the Forgotten Realms* card #207, it is depicted trampling a settlement. As the flavor on the card says: "When it rises, nations fall". The tarrasque also features on one of the showcase cards for that set, #333. This is a black and white illustration with a spikier tarrasque than has been shown previously.



Magic: the Gathering: Adventures in the Forgotten Realms (2021)

The *Commander Legends: Battle for Baldur's Gate* set has a card titled *You Look Upon the Tarrasque* which gives its player the options of running and hiding or gathering courage.



Magic: the Gathering: Commander Legends: Battle for Baldur's Gate (2022)

Greyhawk

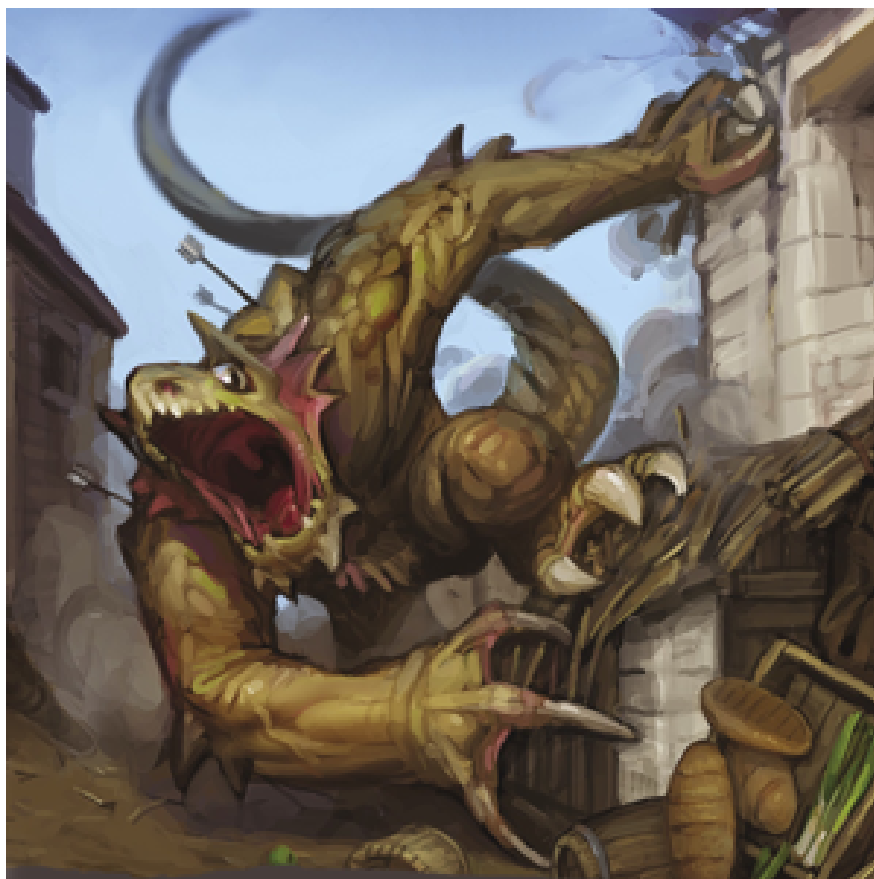
The tarrasque doesn't seem to have a significant presence on Oerth, but it does get mentioned from time to time. There is a throw-away reference to a rampaging tarrasque in *Ivid the Undying*, and a few references to tarrasques in *Living Greyhawk* adventures. *KETI3-04: On the Road Again* claims that tarrasques (plural!) call the Bramblewood Forest home. *PER3-08: A Dark God's Laughter* includes a strange journey during which the heroes witness giants sacrificing demihumans to a tarrasque in a strange alternate version of Perrenland. According to *COR3-19: Folly*, there is a tarrasque tooth in Zagig's museum in the village of Folly north of the Fellreev Forest. Another museum in *COR8-09: Ruins of Slumber* contains the stuffed remains of a tarrasque, but to see that, the players must travel 400 years into the future to visit an Oerth where monsters have long since been wiped out.

One possibility is that the tarrasque's resting place is in the Drachensgrab Hills. As the *World of Greyhawk* boxed set notes: "Legends say that these hills hide the resting place of one or more powerful creatures who may someday return to life," and later "some terrible curse is upon the area, and legends relate that some powerful being or beings will arise in anger if their resting place is ever disturbed". In 5th Edition, *Lost Laboratory of Kwalish* suggests instead that a tarrasque slumbers beneath the Barrier Peaks.

Regrettably, in *WG7: Castle Greyhawk* there is a tarrasque making a cameo appearance in "Fantasy: The Movie", directed by Mordenkainen. The tarrasque is waiting calmly in a dressing room and wears sunglasses which make it immune to light spells. This adventure also includes a stench kow wearing fake moose antlers who pulls a tarrasque out of a helmet.

Historical Reference

The article *The Petit Tarrasque and Other Monsters* in *Dragon #329* recounts the tarrasque's origin story in French legend, and suggests that the Gaul Tarrasque could be represented by making some adjustments to the statistics of a young bronze dragon. Remove the dragon's fly speed and breath weapon, and give it regeneration and a gore attack dealing 1d8+2 damage. Amend its ability scores to reflect an intelligence of 3, a wisdom of 12 and a charisma of 12. The only spell-like abilities that this version of the tarrasque has is the ability to cast *control water* three times per day. The article also notes that Saint Martha's use of holy water to tame the tarrasque should be considered to be a *miracle*.



The Petit Tarrasque, *Dragon #329* (2005)

Dragon #299 suggests that the tarrasque would be appropriate for use in a campaign based on medieval knights, while *HR6: Age of Heroes* includes the tarrasque on a list of disallowed monsters for a Greek campaign.

Kingdoms of Kalamar

Detailed in *Dangerous Denizens: The Monsters of Tellene*, the aquatic tarrasque lives deep within the Black Lake in the Elenon Mountains. Known as the Beast of the Lake, the creature rises only rarely from the remote depths of the lake. According to *The Lost Tomb of Kruk-Ma-Kali*, the greater the disturbance of the waters of the lake, the higher the odds of the tarrasque surfacing. Large creatures should take heed.



Aquatic Tarrasque, *Dangerous Denizens: The Monsters of Tellene* (2003)

Sages are uncertain if this tarrasque is *the* tarrasque or if it is a distinct and separate species. It has nearly identical stats to the *Monster Manual* version, but is aquatic and gains a swim speed of 20 ft. plus the swim skill.

Ravenloft

The tarrasque doesn't feature in any Ravenloft adventures, but it gets a nod in the *Ravenloft: Realm of Terror* boxed set as a suggestion for use in a returning-beast themed adventure. Much later, in the *Adventurers League* release *DDAL4-11: The Donjon*, a weathered, ancient stone statue of the tarrasque might be discovered in the Bone Fen.

Spelljammer

The earth body Falx, detailed in *SJR4: Practical Planetology*, is a planet of tarrasques! There are several hundred of the creatures spread over the surface of the planet and they prey on smaller lizards known as imbul. Sages disagree on whether Falx is the home of all tarrasques, or if there are some subtle differences between Falx tarrasques and those found on other worlds. (An honorable mention here to *Invasion from the Planet of Tarrasques*, a *DM's Guild* adventure in which Halaster opens a portal to Falx allowing the tarrasques to invade Waterdeep.)

Roger E. Moore dedicates his entire *Editorial* in *Dragon* #175 to giant space hamsters. The fact that some giant hamster variants can stand up to a tarrasque is one of the many reasons listed to love them. Transporting giant space hamsters to deal with the tarrasque infestation of Falx could easily be the seed for a Spelljammer adventure.

Comparative statistics

					
Edition	AD&D (1st Edition)	AD&D 2nd Edition	D&D 3.5 Edition	D&D 4th Edition	D&D 5th Edition
Source	<i>Monster Manual II</i>	<i>Monstrous Manual</i>	<i>Monster Manual v.3.5</i>	<i>Monster Manual</i>	<i>Monster Manual</i>
Size	L (50' long)	G (50' long)	Colossal	Gargantuan	Gargantuan
Type			Magical Beast	Elemental magical beast	Monstrousity (titan)
Alignment	Neutral	Nil	Always neutral	Unaligned	Unaligned
No. Appearing	1	1	Solitary		
Armor Class	-3	-3	35	43	25
Hit Points	300 hp	300 hp (±70 HD)	48d10+594 (858 hp)	1,420 hp	676 (33d20 + 330)
Speed	9" (+6" rush)	9, rush 15	20 ft.	8, burrow 8, climb 8	40 ft.
Abilities	Int Animal	Int Animal (1) Morale Champion (15)	Str 45, Dex 16, Con 35, Int 3, Wis 14, Cha 14	Str 42, Dex 26, Con 36, Int 3, Wis 18, Cha 7	Str 30, Dex 11, Con 30, Int 3, Wis 11, Cha 11
Senses			Scent	Perception +19, Blindsight 20	Blindsight 120 ft.
Saves			Fort +38, Ref +29, Will +20	Fort 49, Ref 38, Will 32	
Reach			20 ft.	3	10-20 ft, depending on attack
Attacks	6	6 (THAC0 -5)	Bit +57 melee, 2 horns +52 melee, 2 claws +52 melee, tail slap +52 melee	Bite +34 vs. AC	Bite +19 melee weapon, claw +19 melee weapon, horns +19 melee weapon, tail +19 melee weapon
Damage	1-12/1-12/2-24/5-50/1-10/1-10	1-12/1-12/2-24/5-50/1-10/1-10	Bite 4d8+17, horn 1d10+8, claw 1d12+8, tail slap 3d8+8	1d12+16 damage and ongoing 15 damage (save ends)	Bite 4d12+10, claw 4d8+10, horns 4d10+10, tail, 4d6+10
Special Attacks	Sharpness bite, terror	Sharpness bite, terror	Augmented critical, frightful presence, improved grab, rush, swallow whole	Elder of Annihilation, Fury of the Tarrasque, Trample, Frenzy, Action points	Siege Monster, Multiattack, Frightful Presence, Swallow, Legendary Actions
Special Defences	Reflective carapace, regeneration, immune to fire and psionics, can only be killed using a wish	Reflective carapace, regeneration, immune to fire and psionics, can only be killed using a wish	Carapace, damage reduction 15/epic, immunity to fire, poison, disease, energy drain and ability damage, regeneration 40, spell resistance 32	Earthbinding aura, Eternal Slumber	Immune to fire, poison, non-magical weapons, or being charmed, frightened, paralyzed or poisoned, Legendary Resistance, Magic Resistance, Reflective Carapace
XP	37,500	107,000	CR 20	95,000	Challenge 30 (155,000 XP)
Treasure	None (body parts)	None (body parts)	None		

References

- [*Monster Manual II*](#), p117-118 (August 1983)
- [*World of Greyhawk*](#), *A Catalogue of the Land Flanaess*, p49, 53 (October 1983)
- Dragon* #93, p30, Ay pronunseeAYshun gyd (January 1985)
- [*H2: The Mines of Bloodstone*](#), p38 (December 1986)
- [*H4: The Throne of Bloodstone*](#), p55 (May 1988)
- Forgotten Realms 1990 Calendar* (May 1989)
- The Art of the Advanced Dungeons & Dragons Game*, p119 (September 1989)

AD&D Adventure Gamebook #9: *The Sorcerer's Crown*, p25, 66-67 (July 1986)
 AD&D Adventure Gamebook #11: *Clash of the Sorcerers*, p16-188 (November 1986)
[Manual of the Planes](#), p25 (June 1987)
 Dragon #130, p40, Better Living Through Alchemy (February 1988)
 Dragon #137, p18, Treasures of the Wilds (September 1988)
[DL16: World of Krynn](#), p83 (November 1988)
 Dragon #142, p10, Sage Advice (February 1989)
[Monstrous Compendium Volume Two](#) (August 1989)
 Forgotten Realms comic #7, p23 (March 1990)
 Forgotten Realms comic #8, p5-6, 15-20 (April 1990)
[Ravenloft: Realm of Terror](#), p137 (June 1990)
[PHBR5: The Complete Psionics Handbook](#), p123 (January 1991)
[SJR4: Practical Planetology](#), p8, 56 (June 1991)
 Dragon #175, p18, The Perils of Prehistory (November 1991)
 Dragon #175, p100, Editorial (November 1991)
 Dragon #180, p78, Sage Advice (April 1992)
[Monster Mythology](#), p73 (April 1992)
 1992 Trading Cards, card #365/750 (June 1992)
 Dragon #183, p96, 98, Sage Advice (July 1992)
 Dragon #192, p77, Sage Advice (April 1993)
[Monstrous Manual](#), p339 (June 1993)
[HR6: Age of Heroes](#), p63 (March 1994)
 CR5: *Deck of Encounters, Set Two*, Path of the Tarrasque (June 1994)
 Dungeon #48, Sleeping Dragon, p54 (July 1994)
[Elminster's Ecologies](#), *Anauroch*, p32 and *Explorer's Manual*, p17 (September 1994)
 Spellfire: *Master the Magic* card game, Forgotten Realms Booster Pack, Set 4, card #1 (November 1994)
 Dark Sun: *Wake of the Ravager* (1994)
[PHRB14: The Complete Barbarian's Handbook](#), p123 (January 1995)
 Ivid the Undying, p85 (March 1995)
[Spellbound](#), *Campaign Guide*, p107 (June 1995)
 Polyhedron #109, p5, The Ravens Bluff Trumpeter (July 1995)
[Night Below: An Underdark Campaign](#), *Book III: The Sunless Sea*, p24 (November 1995)
 Dragon #226, p23, Off-the-Cuff NPCs (February 1996)
 Spellfire: *Master the Magic* card game, 4th Edition Starter Deck, card #134 (June 1996)
[Netheril: Empire of Magic](#), p83, *Encyclopedia Arcana*, p10 (October 1996)
[How the Mighty are Fallen](#), p21, (November 1996)
[Powers & Pantheons](#), p36 (August 1997)
 Dragon #250, p22, Sage Advice (August 1998)
[The Apocalypse Stone](#), p57-59 (March 2000)
 Dragon #271, p41, 48, The Totem Deck (May 2000)
 Dragon #271, p114, Sage Advice (May 2000)
[Reverse Dungeon](#), p52, 54 (May 2000)
 Monster Manual, p174-175 (October 2000)
 Dragon Annual #5, p74, 101 Evil Schemes (December 2000)
[Dragon #280](#), p44, Polymorphology: Change for the Sake of Change (February 2001)

[Magic of Faerûn](#), p48 (July 2001)
[Dragon #288](#), p60, Tag Team Terror (October 2001)
[Song and Silence: A Guidebook to Bards and Rogues](#), p46 (December 2001)
[Dragon #293](#), p54, Monsters with Class (March 2002)
[Dragon #296](#), p47, 51-52, Worshipers of the Forbidden (June 2002)
[Dragon #299](#), p29, Knights (September 2002)
Dangerous Denizens: The Monsters of Tellene, p198 (July 2003)
[Dungeon #100](#), p94-95, Beast of Burden (July 2003)
[Monster Manual v.3.5](#), p240-241 (July 2003)
 COR3-19: Folly, p18 (2003)
 KETI3-04: *On the Road Again*, p4 (2003)
 PER3-08: *A Dark God's Laughter*, p11 (2003)
[Dragon #329](#), p48-54, The Petit Tarrasque and Other Monsters (March 2005)
[Dungeon #122](#), p101, Essential Works (May 2005)
[Dungeon Master's Guide II](#), p283, 284 (June 2005)
[Magic of Incarnum](#), p65-66, 91 (September 2005)
 Wizards of the Coast website, [Elite Opponents: The Tarrasque](#) (November 2005)
The Lost Tomb of Kruk-Ma-Kali, p25 (January 2006)
 Wizards of the Coast website, [Ask Wizards](#) (April 2006)
[Secrets of Xen'drik](#), p7 (July 2006)
[Legend of the Silver Skeleton](#), p19 (October 2006)
 EXP-9: *Endgame*, p2-4, 24-25 (2006)
[Dragon #353](#), p49, Princes of Elemental Good (March 2007)
[Bestiary of Kryn, Revised](#), p146 (April 2007)
 Wizards of the Coast website, [Ask Wizards](#) (April 2007)
 Wizards of the Coast website, [Ask Wizards](#) (May 2007)
 Wizards of the Coast website, [Elite Opponents: Creatures with a Lot of Heads](#) (June 2007)
[Dragon #359](#), p88-95, The Ecology of the Tarrasque (September 2007)
[Dragons of Eberron](#), p24, 105 (October 2007)
[Monster Manual](#), p10, 13 (June 2008)
[Adventurer's Vault](#), p7 (September 2008)
 COR8-09: *Ruins of Slumber*, p14 (2008)
[Dragon #383](#), p42, The Art of Binding: Warlock Vestiges (January 2010)
[Dark Sun Campaign Setting](#), p118 (August 2010)
[Dungeon #192](#), *Monster Manual Update: Grell* (July 2011)
[Dragon #418](#), p4-8, History Check: The Tarrasque (December 2012)
[Dragon #418](#), p9-12, The End Is Nigh! Followers of the Tarrasque (December 2012)
 EPIC5-3: *Shadow Storm*, p62 (January 2014)
[Monster Manual](#), p286-287 (September 2014)
[D&D Sage Advice](#) (November 2014)
[Dungeon Master's Guide](#), p69, 221 (December 2014)
Dice Masters: Battle for Faerûn, card #53 (February 2015)
[D&D Sage Advice](#) (September 2015)
[DDAL4-11: The Donjon](#), p18 (May 2016)
[D&D Sage Advice](#) (June 2016)

[*Storm King's Thunder*](#), p12 (September 2016)
[*Volo's Guide to Monsters*](#), p30 (November 2016)
[*D&D Sage Advice*](#) (October 2017)
[*Dragon+ #17*](#), Nicholas the Gift-Giver's Northern Palace, p7 (December 2017)
[*Dungeons & Dragons Adventures Outlined Coloring Book*](#) (August 2018)
[*CCC-QCC2018-01: Of Gods and Monsters*](#), p3-17 (September 2018)
[*Waterdeep: Dragon Heist*](#), p137 (September 2018)
[*Invasion from the Planet of Tarrasques*](#) (November 2018)
[*Lost Laboratory of Kwalish*](#), p58, 60 (November 2018)
[*D&D Sage Advice*](#) (November 2019)
[*Infernal Machine Rebuild*](#), p104 (November 2019)
[*CCC-BWM-007-01: The Beast Beneath*](#), p3 (April 2020)
[*CCC-BMW-007-03: The Beast Unleashed*](#), p3, 6, 11 (April 2020)
[*CCC-RCC-01-06: The Handfasting*](#), p21 (April 2020)
[*The Border Kingdoms*](#), p35 (April 2020)
[*Exploring Eberron*](#), p129 (July 2020)
[*Icewind Dale: Rime of the Frostmaiden*](#), p260, 315 (September 2020)
[*Beasts & Behemoths: A Young Adventurer's Guide*](#), p100-101 (October 2020)
[*CCC-GSP02-03: Maladomini Unleashed*](#), p22 (November 2020)
[*CCC-GSP04-01: Devil King High School Year One*](#), p12 (November 2020)
[*Tasha's Cauldron of Everything*](#), p135 (November 2020)
[*CCC-HERO-BK03-03: A Lute Strung Double*](#), p4-29 (December 2020)
[*Magic: the Gathering: Adventures in the Forgotten Realms*](#), cards #207 and #333 (July 2021)
[*Magic: the Gathering: Commander Legends: Battle for Baldur's Gate*](#), card #262 (June 2022)

Other ENCyclopedia entries

Visit the [Monster ENCyclopedia index](#) for links to other entries in this series.

Comments? Suggestions?

Visit the [discussion thread](#) on ENWorld.
