

Open Campaign DMG

These **guidelines** are designed for a campaign that spans locations days, weeks and even months apart, played at a higher game difficulty than under RAW. They are given below in order of *priority*: so that the most valuable come first.

Characters are heroic, but less exceptionally so; and the pace of their advancement spans much longer timeframes... to allow for the unfolding of the world.

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Creating Encounters

Concerns are to produce challenging encounters for players that balance campaign attrition with availability of revival, and tie-in to rates for the background world assumptions.

Encounter Classification *p*

Encounters are classified as either **attritional** (Hard threshold) or **lethal** (Deadly threshold). The former likely merely deplete resources; the latter might result in character deaths. The mix of encounters between long rests will vary greatly, but overall attritional encounters should be around twice as frequent as lethal ones.

Revised multipliers are used for number of monsters faced -

Monsters	Multiplier
1	0.5
2	0.75
3 to 6	1
7 to 10	1.25
11 to 14	1.5
15+	2

Encounters Between Rests *p*

One adventuring day might span a couple of sessions, with one or two encounters resolved in each, and characters might take a **short rest every session**, and a **long rest every other session**. On average, they should be able to handle **3 attritional** and **1 lethal** encounter **between long rests**.

Monster Recovery *p*

By RAW it appears that named monsters – as NPCs – use the same resting rules as characters. For the open campaign, all creatures use the same resting rules.

Narrative Quests *p*

Quests can reduce the number of combat encounters required to advance, awarding XP to characters at the Medium threshold for their level.

To satisfy a quest, a prefigured narrative outcome must be achieved. It must have costs and risks, and be possible to fail with consequences for failure. Completing a significant quest might grant **inspiration**.

Risk of Death *p*

A party could face a score of truly **lethal encounters** over their journey from level 1 to 20. If each one offers a palpable chance of death – say about a **1:12** (per character) – even half-a-dozen such encounters are likely to claim one or two lives.

Attritional encounters must be an order of magnitude less risky – perhaps **1:120** – but a party might come to face a hundred of them, and is unlikely to come through half that number without losses.

The Role of Revival

On average such encounters could kill a character thrice over. **Half the time**, powerful **revivification** magic puts them back on their feet.

The table indicates likely revivals and permanent deaths for a party of four –

In Tier	Revivals	Permanent
1	1	1
2	+3	+2
3	+4	+3
4	+3	+2

Character Advancement

Concerns are to create pacing that maps well to the lengthier narrative arcs of an open world, while reconciling DMG XP thresholds, adventuring days, and level advancement rates.

Slower Pace (halved) *p*

Level 1 – characters typically advance after **two** sessions

Tier 1 – characters typically advance once per **four** sessions

Tier 2 – characters typically advance once per **six** sessions

Tier 3 & 4 – characters typically advance once per **four** sessions

An Adventuring Career *p*

Up to **90 four hour sessions** might be needed to go from level 1 to level 20; narrating

about 200 encounters over 33 “adventuring days¹”. Another 250² days could be required for rest and recovery, plus as many as 500 to train.

Thus, a character’s career from level 1 to 20 might span **two years** of a character’s lifetime, adventuring, resting and taking downtime –

Career Pacing					
Level	Sessions / Level	Adjusted XP / Session / Party	Adjusted XP / Session / Char.	Adventuring Days / Session	Encounters / Session
1	2	600	150	0.5	2
2	2	1200	300	0.5	2
3	4	1800	450	0.4	2
4	6	2533	633	0.4	1
5	6	5000	1250	0.4	1
6	6	6000	1500	0.4	1
7	6	7333	1833	0.4	1
8	6	9333	2333	0.4	1
9	6	10667	2667	0.4	1
10	6	14000	3500	0.4	1
11	4	15000	3750	0.4	1
12	4	20000	5000	0.4	1
13	4	20000	5000	0.4	1
14	4	25000	6250	0.4	1
15	4	30000	7500	0.4	1
16	4	30000	7500	0.4	1
17	4	40000	10000	0.4	1
18	4	40000	10000	0.4	1
19	4	50000	12500	0.4	1
20					
	86			33	104

World Population

Concerns are to contextualise character power within world demographics, ensuring that there are those who can question, oppose or hold them to account at every level.

¹ **Adventuring days** relate to refresh of abilities, rather than the day-night cycle: they can span any amount of calendar time.

² Using rests based on “Gritty Realism” and training based on that under “Downtime”, in the *Dungeon Master’s Guide*.

Class-equivalence Among the Population *p*

At **tier 0**, about **1/4** are **skilled** and the remainder **untrained**. About **1/250** people have **tier 1** character class-equivalence. That base multiplies by **1/5** per higher tier, e.g. 1/1250 are tier 2.

- Small towns and surrounding rural populations can be collected into one **catchment** to determine the number of class-equivalent NPCs (“CCEQs”) among them;
- **Settled** regions and **enslaved** populations decline to about half of the baseline, e.g. **1/500**; about 1/8 slaves are skilled, with typically no CCEQs above tier 2³;
- **Centres of excellence** and catchments on a **war-footing** can evolve to ten times the baseline, e.g. **1/25** are tier 1 scaling as before (losing sides return to norm).

Monster Manual NPC stat blocks such as the Mage represent class-equivalence in abstract; more detail can be added from their character class where required. Their **Hit Dice** suggests their tier.

Locating (non-named) NPCs *p*

When players want to locate a non-named NPC with class-equivalence, as they might when seeking training, the following DCs can be used –

- An Intelligence (Investigation) ability check **DC 5*tier** might locate the NPC, so long as they are not taking steps to avoid being found;
- **+5** if the search is conducted in a settlement with fewer than 10,000 inhabitants;
- **-5** if the search is in a centre of excellence or settlement on a war footing.

Example: Waterdeep 1489 (settled, ~2m) *p*

The **City of Waterdeep** refers to the settlement inside the walls, while **Greater Waterdeep** refers to settlements immediately outside the walls. The **Province** refers to a farming region extending 30-40 miles inland, and up and down the coast; with patrols out to 15 miles past Aphaill, but only as far as Zundbridge to the south. The rest being defended by militias and private forces.

Greater & Provincial year-round: **~1.6m** density = large garden to sizeable farm per family.

City winter: ~200k density = 40m²/person i.e. spacious.

City summer: ~800k density = 10m²/person i.e. crowded.

Total winter: **~1.8m**

Total summer: **~2.4m⁴**

Tier	CCEQs	DC to find
1	4000	5
2	800	10
3	160	15
4	32	20
Epic+	6	25

³ Higher tier CCEQs evade or escape slavery.

⁴ Food production (including fishing) is about adequate for the permanent population, but imports are needed in the high season.

Example: Menzoberranzan 1489 (COE, ~20,000 free) p

The city of **Menzoberranzan** in the Underdark contains a large slave population: about 2:1 to free.

Skill level	Slaves	Price
Untrained	35,000	150gp (3d4*20) i.e. 2sp/day earnings
Skilled	5,000	1500gp (3d4*200) i.e. 2gp/day earnings
Tier 1	80	3000gp (3d4*400) i.e. 4gp/day earnings
Tier 2	16	6000gp (3d4*800) i.e. 8gp/day earnings

Tier	CCEQs	DC to find
1	800	0
2	160	5
3	32	10
4	6	15
Epic+	1	20

Treasure

Concerns are to produce an economy that roughly functions, with adventuring earnings and outgoings such that characters operate at parity with other successful creatures.

Low Magic Campaign p

Characters have a **-10 penalty** to find magic items (using Xanathar's) and use **double the costs** (low end of the bracket for consumables, high end for permanents).

When "You" are the Caster p

Where the wording of the item makes you the **caster**, as implied by "as if you cast" or "that you can cast", you must maintain concentration if required.

Items & Gold / Party p

Tier 1 – per Party by Level 4

RAW accumulated by end of tier = 2,625 gp: campaign adjustment, **none**

Tier 2 – per Party by Level 10

RAW accumulated by end of tier = 36,375 gp: campaign adjustment, **halve** DMG roll

Tier 3 – per Party by Level 16

RAW accumulated by end of tier = 148,875 gp: campaign adjustment, **quarter** DMG roll

Tier 4 – per Party by Level 20

RAW accumulated by end of tier = 523,875 gp: campaign adjustment, **eighth** DMG roll

Campaign Adjusted Treasure / Party of 4													
Tr	Consumable	Permanent	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	GP/Hoard	Hoards/Lvl
1	2.53	0.62	1.47	0.66	0.44			0.53	0.05			375	1-3
2	9.34	2.88	4.78	2.8	1.68	0.27		2.1	0.5	0.09		1,875	3
3	15.36	4.85	5.83	4.27	3.88	1.47	0.24	2.34	1.1	0.84	0.24	9,375	2
4	20.24	6.04	5.83	4.27	4.96	3.71	1.89	2.34	1.3	0.99	0.99	46,875	2

Downtime

Concerns are to fix a frank error in the DMG, and to provide a common set of hours between such disparate settlements as those on the surface world and those in the Underdark.

Absence while Building a Stronghold *a*

Work can continue while a character is away, with each 2 days absence adding 1 day to the construction time.

Times of the Day *p*

The following divisions are typical of many settlements and helpful to travellers—

1. **Early** watch (12night to 4am)
2. **First** watch (4am to 8am)
3. **Second** watch (8am to 12noon)
4. **Third** watch (12noon to 4pm)
5. **Fourth** watch (4pm to 8pm)
6. **Late** watch (8pm to 12midnight)

Settlements frequently relabel the watches, e.g. saying “grave” rather than “late”.

Urban dwellers often do not rise until second watch, and conduct most business in the third and fourth watches. In more civilised parts, noon is well-established as an ambiguous period that is neither part of the second watch nor of the third.

Power and Society

Concerns are to provide societies that incorporate the world metaphysics, and common social evils that are able to function consistently at scale.

Influential People and Organisations *a*

Power pivots on PCs and CCEQs, who can count themselves as strong as a small or even large army. This results in high-tier characters occupying the rulership roles of most polities—the Open Lord in Waterdeep and Matron Baenre in Menzoberranzan are examples. Heirs to power may have great advantages—magic items and loyal guardians—but to rule they must first adventure.

The unpredictable availability and concentration of power causes volatility, which elites attempt to mitigate via collaborative structures, designed to tip the balance in favour of people that they approve of – the Red Wizards, the hidden Lords and the Ruling Council of Eight are examples.

Characters are likely to find themselves increasingly drawn into alliance or conflict with such organisations as they advance.

Characters and Elites

The unearthing and destruction of vast amounts of wealth creates a potential for social mobility, which then plays out according to the whims of a small number of powerful individuals. Characters are therefore vectors of unwelcome turmoil for societies that seek to lock inequity in, under ruthlessly organised rulership.

The elites of disrupted societies, or those that fear disruption, will seek to destroy characters if they cannot control them.

Slavery *p*

Slavery of unskilled, skilled and low-tier characters is common in places such as Thay and the Underdark; especially among drow, duergar and fomorians. About 1/5 of such creatures own on average 5 slaves, while 1/50 own on average 50.

Trade

Adult slaves in good health are priced on the basis of 2 years earnings from their labour and are expected to survive 10 years in service. A seller could be forced down to half the starting price through circumstances or hard bargaining. Prices are sometimes paid in trade goods or promises of goods such as shares in future harvests.

Torture *p*

Torture is no more effective than other methods in obtaining the truth, and is principally used to instil fear in communities through exemplary punishment.

Application

Jailers can choose to prevent short or long rests for creatures they have imprisoned, and they can spend a day of downtime to reduce one ability score of a prisoner by 1 point. The prisoner resists by making a saving throw for that ability against a DC equal to their torturer's passive **Wisdom (Medicine)**, for Strength, Dexterity or Constitution, or passive **Charisma (Intimidation)**, for Intelligence, Wisdom or Charisma. A prisoner loses 1d8 hit points at the end of each day of such treatment.

Survival

Provided its jailers don't choose to kill it, a creature can survive in brutal conditions for years. After a number of days equal to its **Constitution** score, it's hit point

maximum is reduced by 1. This repeats until the creature dies or is released. For valued prisoners, jailers might allow periods of recuperation to recover these points.