



LEVEL UP

# HERE BE MONSTERS

**T**he Monstrous Menagerie is a bestiary for *Level Up: Advanced 5th Edition*. It contains all of the classic monsters that you need to play the game, carefully tuned to provide just the right level of tactical challenge—along with quite a few new faces.

With around 600 monsters, variants, and monster templates—many of them suitable for high level play—there are unique challenges for an adventuring party of any level. From the humble kobold to the titanic tarrasque, each monster has new tricks, new treasure, new combat strategies, and more detailed worldbuilding and adventure hooks than ever before.

For good measure, we're including new guidance on how to build more fun monsters (Appendix C: Designing Monsters) and more challenging combat encounters (Appendix D: Designing Combat Encounters), along with a new type of monster—

the elite monster—that's built to match up against an entire party of adventurers in a way that even a legendary monster can't.

While every monster in this book has been tuned to provide a satisfying combat challenge, a wise party knows that not every encounter leads to battle. In *Level Up* few creatures are inherently good or evil (or chaotic or lawful), and most monsters can become either implacable enemies or steadfast allies. Adventurers may find themselves fighting alongside hobgoblin soldiers against a fallen angel riding a corrupted unicorn. Deep-delving heroes may win the friendship of distrustful dark elves, and run afoul of an imprisoned titan or a forgotten god.

Consider everything in this book as merely a suggestion! Modify monsters and rewrite stories however you like. Every stat block and bit of lore in this tome describes a potential monster: the real creature is what appears in your game.



# Monster Entries

You can use the monster information in this book to inspire your game preparation or worldbuilding ahead of time. You can also use it on the fly. Just flip open the book: each monster entry contains everything you need to generate a unique encounter, with suggested encounter groups, treasure, monster behaviors, and even names.

A monster entry has the following parts: description, legends and lore, sample encounters, monster signs, monster behavior, optional monster-specific tables, optional sample names, and stat blocks.

## Description

This is an essay describing the monster's place in the world. It may contain ecological information and story hooks. Like every other part of a monster entry, this description is for inspiration only: you are free to use another setting's lore or invent your own.

## Legends and Lore

What does an adventurer know about a monster? The Legends and Lore section describes the information a character might recall about a monster with a successful skill check. The higher the check, the more in-world information—natural history, weaknesses, and so on—the character recalls.

Even if a character learns nothing else about a monster, a DC 10 check is usually sufficient to recognize it by sight. At the Narrator's discretion, recognizing a monster might not require a roll (for common creatures) or might be difficult or impossible (for rare or unknown monsters).

## Sample Encounters and Treasure

Most monster entries include sample encounters, usually featuring multiple variations and varying difficulty levels. For instance, the goblin monster entry includes encounters suitable for beginning adventurers. A handful of goblins is enough to challenge a low-level party. It also features challenges for mid-level groups and even an encounter suitable for powerful characters: a goblin boss with a dozen goblin warriors, and possibly a mighty spellcasting goblin warlock or an elite worg-riding cavalry.

This bestiary can be used with *5E* or *Level Up*. If you're using *5E*, you'll want to be aware of a few rules changes which we've introduced. These changes will be discussed in greater detail further on in this introduction.

**Alignment:** Few monsters have an alignment. Those that do (mostly celestials, fiends, and some undead) have their alignment listed among their traits.

**Bloodied Monsters:** Monsters are considered bloodied when they've been reduced to half their hit points or less. There are no rules associated with being bloodied, but other game elements may interact with it. For instance, some monsters have abilities they can only use while bloodied.

**Expertise Dice:** Some monsters have expertise dice listed next to skills, saving throws, or other d20 rolls. An expertise die is rolled and added to the d20 roll it modifies. For instance, a Stealth bonus of +5 (+1d4) means that 1d4 + 5 is added to the monster's d20 roll when it makes a Stealth check.

**New Conditions:** *Level Up* introduces confused, rattled, slowed, fatigue, and strife, which are described fully in Appendix E: Conditions.

**Gazes:** Some monsters' actions include the Gaze keyword in their name. These actions can be taken only if the monster and the target can both see each other. Full rules for gaze attacks can be found later in this introduction.

**Ongoing Damage:** Some attacks, like being set on fire, deal ongoing damage. This damage occurs at the end of each of the affected creature's turns, and it continues until ended by a condition specified by the attack.

**Math Changes:** We've slightly changed the way a few monster statistics are calculated behind the scenes. For instance, some monsters gain different Armor Class benefits from armors, and grapple escape DCs are calculated using a slightly different formula. None of these changes require any tweaking: just use the monsters as they are written.

Similarly, we've included sample treasure hoards along with each sample encounter. A small goblin patrol might have a handful of gold and silver, while a goblin army might have gold, jewels, wagons of trade goods, and multiple magic items.

These sample treasures are a convenience for when you don't have the time to randomly generate or hand-curate a treasure hoard. *Don't use a trea-*



*sure more than once!* It will strain credibility if two aboleths both have the exact same treasure hoards with identical numbers of coins and identical *periapts of health*. The second time a party would earn the same treasure reward, instead hand-pick or randomly generate a treasure using the appropriate rules.

It's important to note that *not every encounter comes with treasure*. In fact, most don't. For most campaigns, **the party finds only one to three treasures over the course of one character level**. The other encounters come with nothing at all or with ordinary equipment and a handful of incidental coins. Don't make the mistake of giving out the sample treasure for each encounter!

If a monster does possess treasure, particularly magical treasure, it may well use it. An intelligent creature with a magic weapon will use that magical weapon if it's capable of doing so. A mage with a *spell scroll* may use the scroll, and a creature with a *potion of healing* may quaff it. Magical treasure not only acts as a reward but poses an increased challenge.

## Monster Signs

Often, an encounter occurs with no warning: a group of characters stumbles into a group of monsters. Sometimes, though, characters come upon a sign of impending danger. Perhaps they see a footprint or hear an ominous, distant wail. Clues like this allow characters to make interesting exploration decisions and make the world feel lived-in.

As a rule of thumb, assume that half of all encounters are preceded by the discovery of a sign (or its potential discovery: some signs may be missed by those who don't make a successful Perception or other skill check).

A group may try to identify a monster by the signs it leaves behind, for instance by examining a footprint. As a rule of thumb, doing so requires a Survival or Investigation check (minimum DC 15), with some monsters being impossible to identify (for instance, a doppelganger's footprint is indistinguishable from that of the creature it mimics, and a distant pillar of smoke offers no clues about the creature that set its flame).

## Monster Behavior

One of the most important elements of any encounter is this: what are the monsters up to? A roll on the monster behavior tables determines whether a monster or group is hiding in ambush, looking for help, preoccupied with a prisoner, or any of thousands of other individual behaviors. These randomized tables can be a great way to quickly get a story idea when you don't have time to read a whole essay.

Nearly every monster comes with its own individualized tables, sometimes broken out by environment or monster number.

## Sample Names

Coming up with a name on the fly can be a hit-or-miss affair. If you need a suitably resonant name for a dread knight, or if the party suddenly takes a liking to a random goblin, we've provided sample name lists for most intelligent monsters.

## Monster-Specific Random Generators

Some monsters call out for unique random charts to give them variety and bring them to life. Does your vampire have an alternate weakness instead of sunlight? Does your lich or dragon have some unique lair defenses sure to complicate the players' lives? Whenever possible, we want to provide inspiring details to make your encounters vivid and memorable.

## Stat Block

Besides descriptions, lore, and other world information, each entry contains stat blocks. A stat block describes a particular creature's capabilities, attacks, combat spells, and other statistics needed to run it as either a social or combat encounter.

One monster entry may contain multiple stat blocks. For instance, the entry for the salamander (an elemental creature made of fire) contains three stat blocks: the salamander (a typical adult member of its species), the salamander nymph (a larval but still very dangerous form of the salamander), and the salamander noble (a larger variant of the salamander that gains extra hit points and fire breath).



## Challenge and XP

Each monster's stat block includes its Challenge Rating (CR). This is an important number for determining whether a monster provides a suitable combat challenge for a group. The higher the Challenge Rating, the tougher the monster.

Appendix D: Designing Combat Encounters includes details about using Challenge Rating to plan a battle or to determine a combat encounter's difficulty. In general, a monster of a given Challenge Rating can challenge two to four characters of the same level. If a single monster's Challenge Rating is more than 50 percent higher than the characters' level, it may be too powerful an adversary for them. Thus, no monster in this book has a CR higher than 30.

Each monster's Challenge Rating is accompanied by a number of experience points (XP). Experience points are one way to reward players for completing an encounter. In some games, when characters have triumphed in a combat or noncombat encounter against a monster, they are awarded the listed experience points. If you are not using experience point-based leveling, you can ignore this number.

## Legendary Monsters

Legendary monsters are powerful apex creatures. They often rule the lands around them for miles. A legendary monster is a formidable opponent that can successfully wage battle against an entire adventuring party.

A legendary monster has up to three legendary actions, which it can use when it's not its turn. Many legendary monsters also have legendary resistances, which are abilities that allow them to succeed at a saving throw that they would otherwise fail. Using Legendary Resistance often comes with a cost.

Legendary monsters are intended to be used as solo opponents or as powerful bosses surrounded by minions. Just like a normal monster, a legendary monster is an appropriate combat challenge for two to four characters with character levels that match its Challenge Rating. However, its additional actions and defenses provide a more interesting battle, suitable for the climax of a story.

## Elite Monsters

An elite monster is a tough and dangerous example of its species or type. Often, an elite monster represents a specific, named individual. For instance, the Skull of Medon is a demilich mastermind, more fearsome even than a normal demilich.

An elite monster is only suitable for gaming groups that desire an unusually difficult combat challenge. Fighting an elite monster is as tough as fighting two ordinary monsters of its Challenge Rating. For instance, although the Skull of Medon's Challenge Rating is 18, it is as tough as two ordinary Challenge Rating 18 demiliches.

An elite monster is a hard combat challenge for four characters with character levels that match its Challenge Rating.

For magical effects and spells that rely on a creature's Challenge Rating, such as *true polymorph*, treat an elite monster as if its Challenge Rating was doubled. For instance, treat an ancient aboleth (a CR 11 elite monster) as if its Challenge Rating was 22.





A creature can be both elite and legendary. Such a monster gains the extra complexity of a legendary monster and the doubled combat power of an elite monster.

## Size

A monster can be Tiny, Small, Medium, Large, Huge, Gargantuan, or Titanic. A Small or Medium monster is around the same size as most characters and takes up a 5 by 5 foot space in combat. A Tiny creature takes up a 2 ½-foot-square space. A Large creature takes up a 10-foot-square space, and a Huge creature takes up a 15-foot-square space. A Gargantuan creature takes up a 20-foot-square space. A Titanic creature takes up at least a 25-foot-square space but can be larger.

## Type

A monster's type describes its origin or nature. While a monster's type has no effect on its own, other game elements may refer to it. For instance, the *charm person* spell only affects creatures of the humanoid type.

Some monsters have a second monster type. For instance, a faerie dragon is both a dragon and a fey creature. Its type is *dragon (fey)*. Any game rules which apply to dragons, or which apply to fey creatures, apply to it.

Other monsters have a categorization that isn't a monster type but which may interact with other game rules. For instance, a werewolf is a humanoid that is also a shapechanger. Its type is *humanoid (shapechanger)*. Rules regarding humanoids and shapechangers apply to it.

The fourteen monster types are as follows:

**Aberrations** are unnatural beings that don't belong to this plane of existence. Many aberrations are telepathic and use a mental power known as psionic power instead of magic. An aboleth is an aberration.

**Beasts** are natural animals whose existence and abilities are nonmagical. A bear and a tyrannosaurus rex are both beasts.

**Celestials** are creatures native to divine realms or heavens. Celestials have alignments, such as Lawful Good. Most celestials are good, although the servants of evil deities can be evil. Angels are celestials.

**Constructs** are beings that were built or made. Some are mindless machines, while others have some form of intelligence. Guardians are constructs.

**Dragons** include red and gold dragons, which are huge reptilian fire-breathers that number among the world's most dangerous monsters. This type includes white dragons, which breathe killing frost, as well as smaller reptilian creatures related to true dragons, such as pseudodragons.

**Elementals** are creatures from one of the Elemental Planes. The most basic of elementals are earth elementals, fire elementals, water elementals, and air elementals, each composed of magically animate earth, fire, and so on. The Elemental Planes are also home to genies, mephits, and other elemental creatures.





**Fey** are creatures that are native to Fairyland, also called the Dreaming. These creatures live in a verdant realm of heightened natural beauty and combine grace and danger. Sprites and pixies are fey.

**Fiends** are evil-aligned creatures from Hell, the Abyss, and other cursed realms. Most fiends are demons and devils, each of which have their own subtypes and hierarchies. Some fiends, such as hell hounds, are neither demons nor devils.

**Giants** look like immense humanoids, standing from 10 feet tall (like ogres) to 30 (like storm giants). Some giants, like trolls, have human-like shapes but monstrous features.

**Humanoids** include a number of different intelligent, language-using bipeds of Small or Medium size. Humans and elves are humanoids, and so are orcs and goblins. Humanoids may employ magic but are not fundamentally magical—a characteristic that distinguishes them from bipedal, language-using fey, fiends, and other monsters. Humanoids have no inherent alignment, meaning that no humanoid ancestry is naturally good or evil, lawful or chaotic.

**Monstrosities** are magical beings usually native to the Material Plane. Some monstrosities combine the features of beasts and humanoids, like centaurs. Others have bizarre or unnatural appearances, like many-tentacled ropers. Monstrosities could only arise in a world suffused with magic.

**Oozes** are ambulatory, predatory amoeboid creatures that infest caverns and other dark places. A gelatinous cube is an ooze.

**Plant** creatures are magical fungoid or plant-like creatures. Ordinary plants, such as trees, are not plant creatures. A treant is an intelligent plant creature that resembles a tree.

**Undead** are supernatural creatures or spirits that are no longer alive but are still animate. Some have been reanimated by magic spells, such as skeletons. Others, like vampires, are the products of an evil ritual or curse.

Celestials, elementals, fiends, some fey, and creatures with the titan subtype are immortal, meaning they are living creatures that do not die of old age (though they may die by other means). Undead and most constructs are creatures that are not living. All other creatures are mortal.

## Armor Class

A monster's Armor Class (AC) includes the effects of its Dexterity bonus and armor, if any. Many monsters have natural armor, such as scaly or tough hides.

## Hit Points

While characters who reach 0 hit points normally make death saves, monsters typically die at 0 hit points. At the Narrator's discretion, a particularly important foe or beloved ally might gain the benefit of death saves, or it might be stabilized with a successful Medicine check.

A Narrator can vary a monster's hit points. Listed after each monster's hit point value is a die expression (for instance  $3d8 + 3$ ). The Narrator can roll this to obtain a number of hit points that may be lower or higher than average for the monster, or raise or lower a monster's hit points within this range to represent a creature that is stronger or weaker than average. For instance, a monster with  $3d8 + 3$  hit points has an average of 16 hit points, but it might have as many as 27 hit points (if it rolled three 8s) or as few as 6 hit points (if it rolled three 1s).

Monsters are considered bloodied when they're reduced to half their hit points or less. Being bloodied isn't a condition and has no effects on its own, but other game elements may interact with it. For instance, some monsters have abilities they can only use while bloodied.

A monster's usual bloodied value is listed next to its hit points. If a Narrator has varied a monster's hit points to make it weaker or stronger, the monster's bloodied value is half its new maximum hit points (rounded down).

## Speed

A monster's Speed represents its walking speed. On its turn, a monster can move a number of feet equal to its Speed.

Some creatures have additional movement modes:  
**Burrow:** The creature can burrow this far on its turn through earth, ice, or sand, but not through rock unless otherwise noted.

**Climb:** The creature can climb this far on its turn and doesn't need to spend extra movement to do so.



**Fly:** The creature can fly this far on its turn. A flying creature falls if it is knocked prone unless it has the ability to hover, noted as “fly (hover)”.

**Swim:** The creature can swim this far on its turn and doesn’t need to spend extra movement to do so.

## Ability Scores

Monsters have the same six ability scores as adventurers (Strength, Constitution, Dexterity, Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma). These ability scores, along with a monster’s proficiency bonus, determine its skills, saving throws, and attack bonuses, just as they do for characters.

## Proficiency Bonus

A monster’s proficiency bonus is added to any ability check that uses a skill, attack roll, saving throw, and the like in which it is proficient. You can grant a new skill or saving throw proficiency to a monster by adding its proficiency bonus to the appropriate check or saving throw.

Armor, weapon, and tool proficiencies aren’t listed in a monster’s stat block. Assume that a monster is proficient with any armor, weapon, or tool that it’s likely to have used before.

## Maneuver DC

In *Level Up*, Maneuver DC is the difficulty class of martial tasks such as escaping a grapple. A monster’s Maneuver DC is 8 + proficiency bonus + the better of the monster’s Strength or Dexterity modifier.

If you’re playing *Level Up*, you can use a monster’s Maneuver DC to determine the success of various combat maneuvers; otherwise, you can ignore it and just use the monster as written.

## Saving Throws

The Saving Throws entry gives bonuses for the saving throws in which a monster is proficient. If a particular saving throw isn’t listed, the monster makes an untrained saving throw (adding the appropriate ability modifier to their d20 roll).

A monster can voluntarily fail a saving throw. An object always fails a saving throw.

Some abilities deal damage and inflict an extra effect, like a condition, on a failed saving throw and deal half damage on a successful saving throw. Unless otherwise specified, a successful saving throw prevents the extra effect.

## Skills

The Skills entry gives bonuses for the skills in which a monster is proficient. If a particular skill isn’t listed, the monster makes an ability check (adding the appropriate ability modified to their d20 roll). Skills frequently gain expertise dice (see below).

## Expertise Dice

Some monsters have expertise dice listed next to skills, saving throws, or other rolls based on their ability scores. An expertise die is a d4, d6, d8, d10, d12, or d20, which is rolled and added to the d20 roll it modifies. For instance, a Stealth bonus of +5 (+1d4) means that 1d4 + 5 is added to the monster’s d20 roll when it makes a Stealth check.

When an expertise die is applied to a passive score, such as passive Perception, the expertise die’s average value (rounded down) is added to the passive score. For instance, a creature gains a +2 bonus to its passive Perception if it has a 1d4 expertise die in Perception checks.

## Resistances, Immunities, and Vulnerabilities

A creature immune to a certain damage type takes no damage of that type when subjected to it. A creature that is resistant to a damage type takes half damage (rounded down). A creature vulnerable to a damage type takes double the damage it is subjected to.

Some creatures are resistant or immune to damage dealt by nonmagical weapons, weapons that are not silvered or magical, or other forms of weapons. This applies to any interaction between a character and a monster. However, when a monster is fighting a monster, a different rule applies: the attacks of any monster of Challenge Rating 5 or higher are considered to be magical for the purposes of overcoming the damage resistance or immunity of a different monster.





## Senses

Every monster has its passive Perception listed under its senses. Some monsters may have one of the following other senses, each of which is modified by the maximum range, in feet, at which the sense operates.

**Blindsight:** Not everything relies on vision to sense the world. A creature with blindsight is not affected by darkness or other heavily or lightly obscured areas, within a certain radius. Creatures adapted to the darkness (like bats and moles) or creatures without eyes (like oozes) have blindsight. Blindsight counts as sight for the purposes of targeting spells and so on.

A naturally blind creature with blindsight is noted as being blind beyond the blindsight's range. Naturally blind creatures are immune to visual illusions (such as those created by *minor illusion*).

**Darkvision:** Darkvision allows a monster to see in dim light as if it were bright light, and in darkness as if it were dim light. Darkvision doesn't allow a creature to see color.

**Tremorsense:** A monster with tremorsense can

detect and pinpoint the vibrations of creatures and moving objects which are in contact with the same surface. It can't detect flying or incorporeal creatures. Tremorsense doesn't count as sight.

**Truesight:** A creature with truesight can see in dim light, darkness, and magical darkness as if it were bright light, see invisible objects, and detect visual illusions and automatically succeed on saving throws against them. Additionally, it can perceive a shapechanger's true form and it can see into the Ethereal Plane.

## Languages

A monster can speak the languages listed in this entry. Sometimes an entry notes that a monster can understand but not speak a language.

**Telepathy:** Some monsters have telepathy listed as a language. Telepathy allows a creature to magically communicate with a target creature within the specified range. The target doesn't need to share a language to understand the telepathic creature, but must understand at least one language. A creature without telepathy can't initiate a telepathic conversation but can respond to a telepathic message.

A telepathic creature doesn't need to see a creature to communicate with a target, as long as it is aware of the target and neither is incapacitated. A creature can't maintain telepathic contact with several creatures simultaneously.

## Traits

Many monsters have characteristics noted below their languages and above their actions. These are called traits. All of a monster's traits should be read carefully when running a monster, since they might influence any facet of the monster's behavior, actions, and abilities in or out of combat.

Sometimes a single monster entry includes multiple monster stat blocks that share a trait. Instead of reprinting the trait inside each stat block, it's listed towards the beginning of the entry, right after the monster's description.

Common monster traits include the following:

**Spellcasting:** A creature with the Spellcasting trait casts spells in much the same way a character does. It has a spellcaster level, spell slots, and a list of known or prepared spells. A monster with



this trait can cast a spell with a higher spell slot if it has one available. The Narrator can customize such a monster's spell list, swapping any known or prepared spell for another of the same level and from the same spell list. When casting an attack cantrip, the monster uses its spellcaster level to determine the effect of the spell.

**Innate and Psionic Spellcasting:** A creature with the Innate Spellcasting trait can cast spells without using spell slots. Instead, it can cast the spells it knows a certain number of times per day. It can't cast a spell it knows at a higher level, and it can't usually swap its spells known for other spells. When casting an attack cantrip, the monster uses its Challenge Rating instead of spellcaster level to determine the effect of the spell.

Psionic spellcasting works much like innate spellcasting. Creatures with the Psionic Spellcasting trait typically don't require components for spellcasting.

## Actions

Monsters can take the following types of actions: action, bonus action, reaction, and legendary action.

Monsters follow the same rules as characters when they take actions, bonus actions, and reactions. They can use one of the options described in their stat block, or they can use the options available to characters (such as using the Dash action, taking the Opportunity Attack reaction, and so on).

If it makes sense to do so, a monster may take an action, a bonus action, or a legendary action outside of combat and when not in initiative order.

Nearly anything can trigger a reaction. However, in the *Monstrous Menagerie*, nearly all of a creature's reactions are triggered by an attack or a spell targeted at that creature or on a creature next to it. This is intended to ease the difficulty of complex battles: you only need to check a monster's reactions when attacking that creature or a close ally.

In the description of a reaction, the term "attacker" refers to the creature that triggered the reaction by casting a spell or making an attack.

Legendary actions are only available to legendary monsters. An effect, like incapacitation, which prevents a creature from taking an action also prevents it from taking a legendary action.

Some of a monster's actions or abilities may be magical in nature. If an ability's description notes

that it is magical, then it may be subject to spells such as *antimagic field* and *dispel magic*. Unless an action or ability specifies that it is magical, it doesn't interact with those spells. For instance, a red dragon's fire breath isn't described as magical, and therefore it can be used inside an *antimagic field*.

## Limited Use Actions

Some of a monster's action options have limits on their use. This is noted in parentheses after the name of the action. A single action can have multiple limits. Limits include:

**X/Day:** A creature can use this option only the given number of times per day. A monster's day ends when it finishes a long rest.

**Recharge:** After the monster uses this ability, it can't use it again until the ability recharges. At the start of each of the monster's turns, the monster can roll a d6. If the roll is within the range in the recharge notation, the ability is recharged and the monster can use it on that turn. For instance, if a monster's ability says "Recharge 4–6", it recharges on a d6 roll of 4, 5, or 6. Taking a rest also recharges the ability.

**Recharges after a Short or Long Rest:** A creature can use this ability once and then must complete a short or long rest before doing so again.

**While Bloodied:** A creature can use this ability only while it is bloodied (while its current hit points are half or less than its total hit points). Similarly, there are abilities that can only be used while not bloodied.

## Attacks

Many of a monster's actions are attacks. An attack can be a melee spell attack, a ranged spell attack, a melee weapon attack, or a ranged weapon attack. A weapon may refer to a manufactured weapon, like a trident, or a natural weapon, like a claw.

An attack usually targets either one creature or one target (which can be either a creature or an object), though an attack might target multiple creatures and might include other requirements (like "one creature grappled by the monster").

An attack's damage is presented as both a fixed number and as a dice expression. You can use whichever you like: use the fixed number to speed play or



roll dice to provide variety.

Some weapons deal different damage in different circumstances. For instance, a longsword is versatile and deals 1d8 damage one-handed or 1d10 damage two-handed. In some cases, both options are noted in an attack description. In other cases, only the most typical option is noted. For instance, if a creature bears a longsword and a shield, its attack description might not include rules for two-handed longsword use. A monster is allowed to use its equipment in ways not listed in the attack entry: consult the description of a weapon to see all the options available.

## Spells

Some monsters have the ability to cast spells just as characters can. Since it can be inconvenient to cross-reference spell descriptions during combat, a monster's most useful combat spells are listed among its actions.

The spell's description provides the spell's level (or notes that it's a cantrip). It also specifies any spell components necessary and whether or not the spell requires concentration. Consult the creature's Spellcasting trait to determine how many times a spell can be cast per day.

A monster's stat block doesn't summarize every spell known by a creature—just the ones most likely to be used during combat. Furthermore, the spell summary doesn't always describe every option available in a spell. For example, if a monster can cast *fire shield*, the spell description might list the effects of either the warm shield or the chill shield, whichever the monster is most likely to use. Additionally, a spell description rarely notes the effects of casting a spell with a higher spell slot. If a monster needs access to these tactical choices, you can refer to the full description of the spell.

*Monstrous Menagerie* stat blocks use the *Level Up* version of each spell, which may slightly differ from the spell as presented in other systems. For instance, the *Level Up* version of *fireball* deals 6d6, not 8d6, damage. Even if you're not using the *Monstrous Menagerie* as part of a *Level Up* game, the spell versions presented here are well-balanced and usable as printed.

## Targets

Some actions require a creature to target one or more other creatures.

A creature can target a creature it can't see with an attack (but it generally attacks with disadvantage, as per the rules for unseen creatures). However, a creature can't target a creature it can't see (or perceive with a similar sense, like blindsight) with a non-attack action that requires the target to make a saving throw, unless the action specifically says it can.

## Gaze

Some actions have the Gaze keyword. Gaze actions have the following rules:

- In order to take the action, the monster must be able to see the target.
- If the target can't see the monster at the time of the action, it has no immediate effect. However, if the monster and the target can see each other at any time before the beginning of the monster's next turn, and the monster is not incapacitated, the action occurs then.
- If the target is not surprised, it can choose to avert its eyes from the monster at the start of the target's turn. This lasts until the start of the target's next turn. While its eyes are averted, the creature can't see the monster.





## Ongoing Damage

Some attacks deal ongoing damage. This is recurring hit point loss that doesn't occur when the ongoing damage is first dealt; instead, it happens at the end of each of the affected creature's turns. An effect that deals ongoing damage specifies the condition that ends the damage. For instance, a fire elemental's slam deals 5 (1d10) ongoing fire damage by causing its target to catch on fire. This ongoing damage can be ended when a creature (either the target or another creature within 5 feet) uses an action to extinguish the flame.

## Combat Strategy

After each monster's stat block is a section describing the monster's strategy in combat. It describes the monster's preferred tactics: for instance, does it typically engage in melee or ranged combat, and when does it use its limited-use moves? Most combat strategy sections also outline situations in which a monster will flee or surrender.

Combat strategy sections are meant to inspire but not constrict the Narrator. Different monsters may employ varying strategies based on circumstances and personality.

## Modifying Monsters

A monster is nothing but statistics until it's brought to life at your game table. Therefore, monsters should be modified to best serve your game. Here are some tools you can use to customize the monsters in this book.

## Variants

Many monsters in the *Monstrous Menagerie* are listed with variant versions. A variant adds or replaces some of the monster's characteristics and frequently alters its Challenge Rating.

A variant might represent an exceptional member of a group. For instance, the balor general is a legendary variant of the balor. Other variants are re-imaginings of the original monster. For instance, a warlord's ghost is a variant of a banshee that doesn't alter the banshee's mechanics at all but changes the monster's story and appearance.

When a variant changes a monster's Challenge Rating, the monster's proficiency bonus is unchanged. For instance, a balor general, Challenge Rating 24, uses the balor's proficiency bonus of +6.

## Templates

This book includes several templates which can be applied to a wide variety of monsters. For instance, the skeleton template can be applied to any beast, humanoid, giant, or monstrosity, allowing you to create skeleton bears, berserkers, and bulettes, among other horrors.

## Other Changes

Two easy ways to get more use out of a stat block are to reskin it or to increase or decrease its Challenge Rating.

To reskin a monster, you can change the way you describe it and its attacks. You might change its type, size, and Intelligence score, and possibly change the damage type dealt by some of its attacks, but otherwise leave its numeric statistics alone. For instance, you could describe a manticores as a flying elven archer, reflavoring its tail attack as a volley of arrows and its claws and bite as a dual wielded axe and rapier.

To increase or decrease the combat challenge offered by a monster, you can use the statistics in Appendix C: Designing Monsters. A quick and easy way to increase a monster's Challenge Rating by 1 is to increase its hit points by 15 and make one of its attacks deal an extra 5 damage each turn.