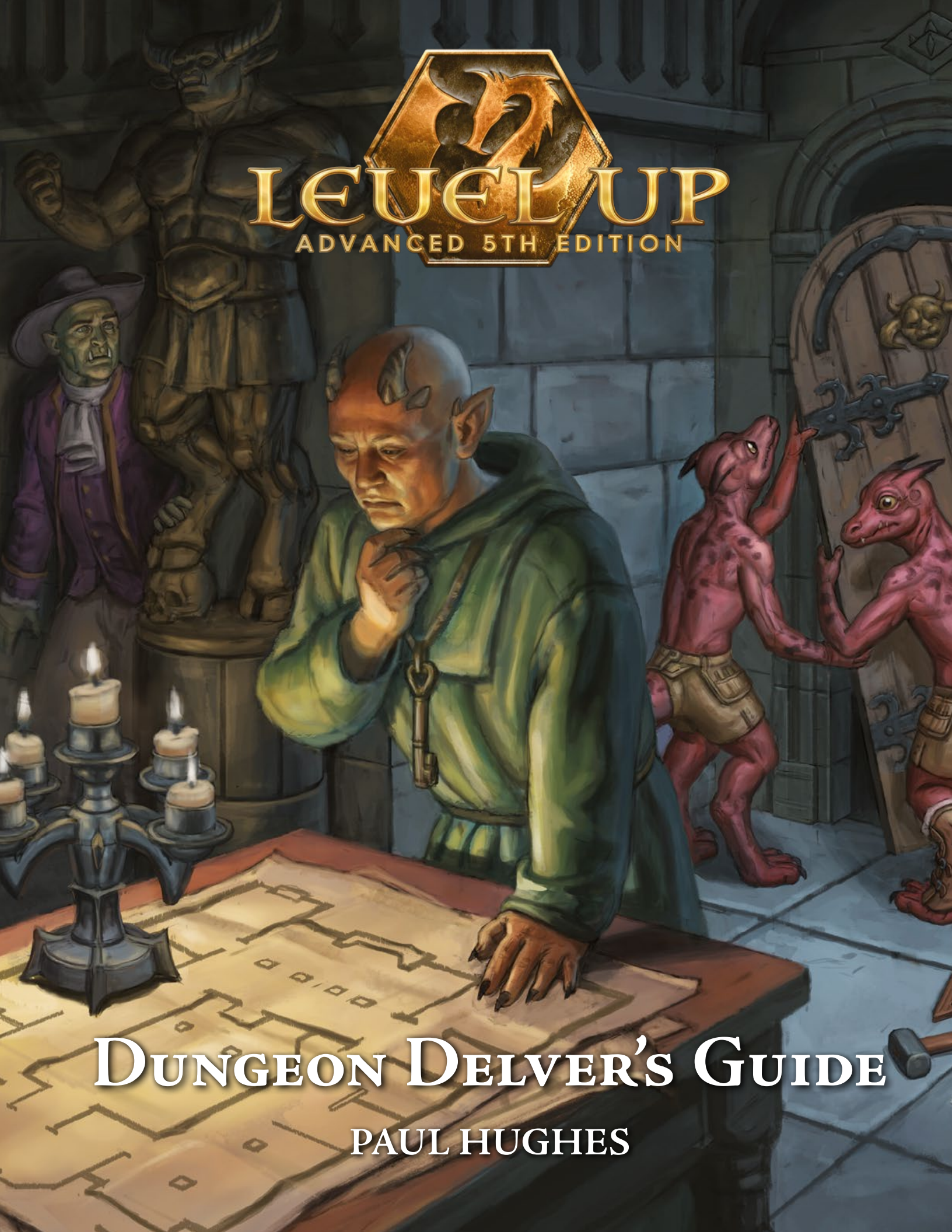

Dungeon Delver's Guide

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Dungeon Delver's Guide

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Level Up: Advanced 5th Edition Logo: Handiwork Games

Publisher: Russ Morrissey

Business Manager: Jessica Hancock

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Special thanks to our Kickstarter backers

See the *Level Up* System Reference Document for a full list of Open Gaming Content.

EN Publishing
PO Box 1945 | Southampton | SO18 9QW | United Kingdom

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LEVEL UP

Delve Deep

Dungeon Delver's Guide (DDG) is a comprehensive toolkit for running (and exploring!) dungeons.

This book presents hundreds of dungeon-themed tricks, traps, treasures, and monsters for use in 5E and *Level Up: Advanced 5th Edition* games. But a collection of cool goodies and baddies doesn't amount to anything unless it's animated by an equally engaging story. *Dungeon Delver's Guide* provides a framework for weaving together adventure ingredients into a coherent, tightly themed story.

Why Dungeons?

The first fantasy RPGs took place in dungeons. Eventually people left the depths behind and emerged blinking into the sunlight to see what the rest of the world had to offer. Cities and towns! The wilderness! Outer space, the planes, and beyond! Fantasy roleplaying offers limitless avenues for exploration. Why would we want to return to the dark, cramped confines of the dungeon?

The fact is, we never really left the dungeon. Every year countless TTRPG dungeon adventures are published. It's hard to find a fantasy video game that *doesn't* include a dungeon delve or two. Over the years dungeon adventures have evolved to become opportunities for focused storytelling and heightened adventure. *Dungeon Delver's Guide* presents a modern approach to underground exploration.

Descending Into the Dark

If you're a player, chapter 1 of *Dungeon Delver's Guide* offers new heritages, cultures, backgrounds, and class archetypes that let you become a part of a dungeon-centric story. When you're a ratling decomposer druid or a grimlock sound sculptor, a dungeon adventure can be, not an expedition into the unknown, but a return home.

Chapter 1 also introduces new spells (including rare, powerful spells that must be found as treasure) and a new category of equipment, cultural equipment, which can be bought only from its seclusive creators (or seized as plunder).

Telling a Story

A dungeon is the perfect environment in which to tell a story. While it's quite possible to run a dungeon without a coherent narrative, a delve can give adventurers the opportunity to discover a mystery, struggle to solve it, and emerge triumphant with new lore learned and evils defeated. Where the campaign is a novel, a dungeon is a short story.

Every element of a dungeon can be enlisted to help tell that story. Architecture, room contents, and even intelligent inhabitants can all have their say, revealing the dungeon's history as adventurers explore it. Lore earned by adventuring can be more satisfying than information gained all at once through a handout or a knowledge check.

To encourage this kind of environmental storytelling, chapter 2 of *Dungeon Delver's Guide* offers three takes on designing dungeons. First we offer a bird's eye view, offering advice, strategies, and tools for dungeon designers. Next we zoom in closer with eight unique random dungeon generators populated with tightly themed enigmas, obstacles, and revelations suitable for any level of play. Finally, we take a close-up tour of eight complete, fully mapped mini-dungeons, each with its own mysteries to uncover over a game session or two.

And of course no dungeon would be complete without traps! This book offers a new approach to traps that uses *Level Up: Advanced Fifth Edition*'s exploration challenge format. With multiple ways to discover, bypass, and disable every trap, each provides a challenge for any party—or a puzzle for clever players.

Further Excavations

Chapter 3 includes more tools Narrators can use to carve out and populate their dungeons, including new procedures for common dungeon activities such as listening at doors, tunneling, and contorting through tight spaces. Chapter 3 also presents new magical treasures, as well as a selection of monsters and NPCs to act as centerpieces for your combat encounters.

For those who want to venture into a truly wondrous landscape, chapter 3 ends with a gazetteer of Underland, an underground realm of vast caverns, haunted cities, and silent seas.

Using This Book with 5e

This book can be used with either 5E or *Level Up*. If you're using 5E, you'll want to be aware of some new *Level Up* rules used in this book. You can incorporate them easily into your 5E game!

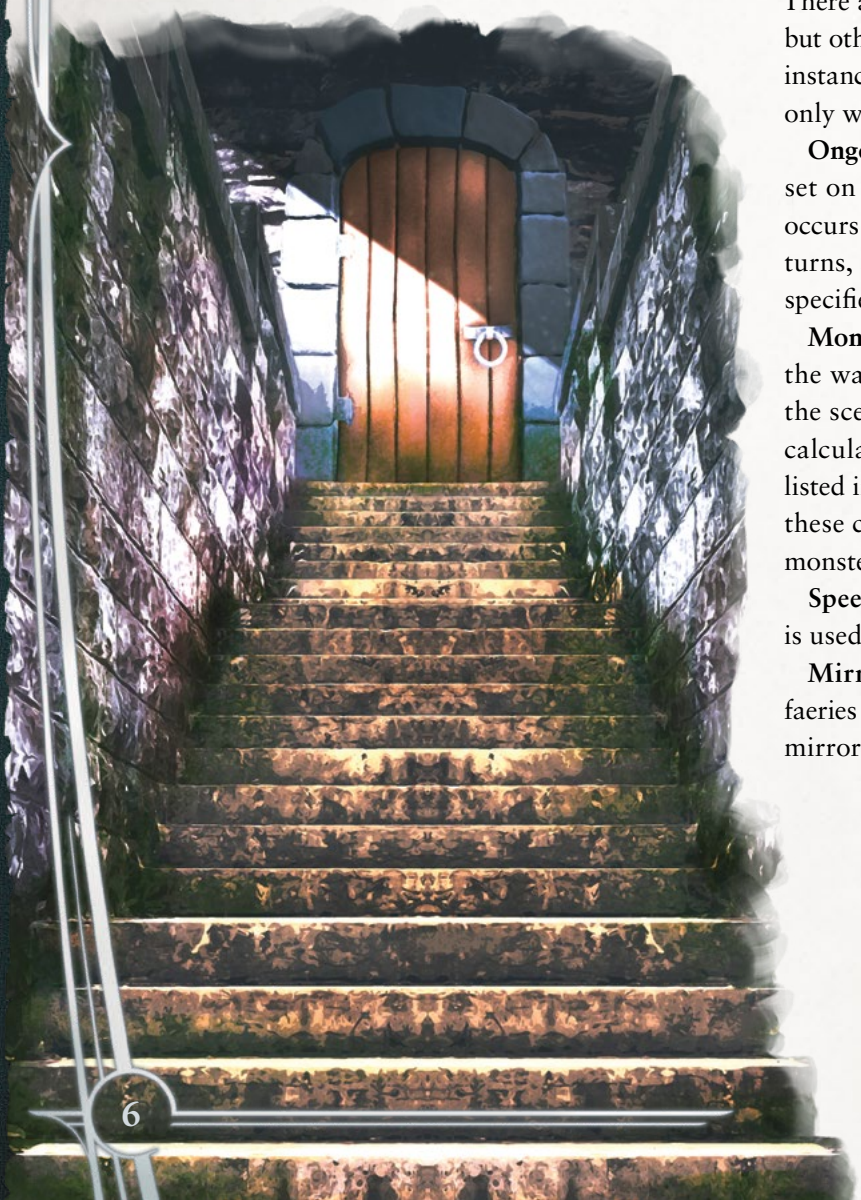
New Monsters and Magic Items: Parts of this book include references to new monsters and magic items that appear in *Level Up*'s *Monstrous Menagerie* and *Trials & Treasures*. Whenever a new monster or magic item appears, it is listed alongside an alternative that also appears in 5E. For instance, a potential combat encounter might be listed as "**aboleth** or **khalkos**." If you're playing 5E, you can use the aboleth; if you're playing *Level Up*, you can choose either the aboleth or the khalkos, a monster that appears in *Monstrous Menagerie*.

New Conditions: *Level Up* uses new conditions: confused, rattled, slowed, fatigue, and strife, which are described fully in appendix B: Conditions.

New Skills: *Level Up* introduces two new skills, Culture and Engineering. The Culture skill is used for representing a knowledge of cultures and customs. The Engineering skill is used for knowledge of, and training in, construction and machinery. It is particularly useful in finding and disarming traps.

Narrator: The Narrator is another name for the Game Master.

Skill Checks: This book uses the term "skill check" as shorthand for an ability check using a skill. Additionally, it sometimes refers to an ability check using a particular skill by its skill name, for instance, a "Deception check" instead of a "Charisma (Deception) check." A skill check can be used with any ability. For instance, the Narrator is most likely to use Charisma for a Deception check, but they might decide that Intelligence is called for if the character tries to recall an obscure fact to masquerade as a sage.



Expertise Dice: Some features or traits grant you an expertise die for an attack roll or saving throw, or in a specific skill or tool proficiency. Expertise dice represent a particular aptitude for a task beyond mere proficiency.

When you make a d20 roll with which you have gained an expertise die, roll 1d4 and add the number rolled to the result of your check. You can never roll more than one expertise die on the same roll. If another class feature or situation grants an expertise die that applies to the same roll, you don't gain another die; instead, the size of the largest expertise die increases by one step for that check, from 1d4 to 1d6, or 1d6 to 1d8. For example, if you have gained two expertise dice, a 1d6 and 1d6, you now have a 1d8 expertise die. If you have a 1d8 expertise die on a check, further expertise dice have no effect.

Bloodied: A creature is considered bloodied when it has been reduced to half its hit points or fewer. There are no rules associated with being bloodied, but other game elements might interact with it. For instance, some monsters have abilities they can use only while bloodied.

Ongoing Damage: Some game effects, 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 effect.

Monster Math Changes: We've slightly changed the way monster statistics are calculated behind the scenes. For instance, grapple escape DCs are calculated using a slightly different formula (and listed in the stat block as Maneuver DC). None of these changes require any tweaking: just use the monsters as they are written.

Speed: In *Level Up,* the capitalized term Speed is used as a shorthand for walking speed.

Mirror Planes: The fey mirror plane in which faeries dwell is called the Dreaming. The shadowy mirror plane of death is called the Bleak Gate.