

# ITEM-BASED ENCUMBRANCE

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*Old-School Essentials* presents two options for determining characters' movement rates based on the amount of gear and treasure carried. This article presents a third option for groups wishing to use a more abstract approach based on tracking the number of items carried.

## Tracking Significant Items Carried

Instead of tracking the *weight (in coins)* of items carried, players using this alternative encumbrance system track the number of *significant items* carried.

**General guideline:** An object that can be carried in one hand counts as 1 item and an object that requires two hands to carry counts as 2 items. Very heavy or bulky objects may count as 3 or more items, per referee judgement.

## Equipped and Packed Items

Each item carried is classified as *equipped* or *packed*.

**Equipped items:** Anything the character is holding, actively using, or has ready to use at short notice: armour worn, shields or weapons held, sheathed weapons, items worn on the belt.

**Packed items:** All other equipment, packed into pockets, sacks, backpacks, etc. In combat, retrieving a packed item optionally takes one round.

## Character Sheet

The *Purist Character Sheet*, available at [necroticgnome.com](http://necroticgnome.com), includes a version supporting item-based encumbrance.

## Weapons and Armour

**Weapons:** One-handed weapons count as 1 item; two-handed weapons count as 2 items.

**Ammunition:** The encumbrance of missile weapons already includes the ammunition and its container.

**Armour:** Shields count as 1 item; light armour (e.g. leather) counts as 1 item; heavy armour (e.g. chainmail) counts as 2 items. Clothing (i.e. unarmoured) does not count as encumbering.

## Adventuring Gear

The item weights of standard adventuring gear are listed in the *Adventuring Gear Item-Based Encumbrance* table, opposite.

**Bundled items:** Some items (e.g. torches, rations) are usually purchased and carried in bundles. Up to 3 such items (e.g. individual torches or days' rations) bundled together count as 1 item.

**Tiny items:** Some very small items (e.g. necklaces, rings) are not treated as encumbering unless carried in large numbers (referee's judgement).

**Storage:** Containers (e.g. backpacks, sacks) only count as an item when not in use. The referee must judge how much can be stored in a container.

## Treasure

**Coins and gems:** Up to 100 coins or gems count as 1 item.

**Jewellery:** Tiny pieces (e.g. necklaces, rings) do not count as encumbering; larger pieces count as 1 item.

**Magic items:** Staves count as 2 items; others count as 1 item.

## Movement Rate

Movement rate is determined by the number of items carried, shown in the **Item-Based Encumbrance** table. A character's equipped and packed items should both be looked up in the table and the slower movement rate used.

### Item-Based Encumbrance

Equip. Items	Packed Items	Move. Rate
0–3	0–10	120' (40')
4–5	11–12	90' (30')
6–7	13–14	60' (20')
8–9	15–16	30' (10')

**Maximum load:** A character carrying more than 9 equipped items or more than 16 packed items cannot move.

## Mounts and Vehicles

The number of items that mounts or vehicles can carry is calculated by dividing their coin capacity (defined in *Old-School Essentials*) by 100. The distinction between packed and equipped items does not apply to mounts and vehicles.

**Example:** A riding horse can carry up to 30 items (3,000 coins) unencumbered and a maximum of 60 items (6,000 coins).

### Item-Based Encumbrance Example

Morgan, a fighter, has the following gear:

**6 equipped items:** Chainmail (2 items), shield (1 item), sword (1 item), shortbow (2 items, including quiver + arrows).

**4 packed items:** Rope (1 item), tinder box (1 item), 3 iron rations (bundle, 1 item), waterskin (1 item).

**Movement rate:** Looking at the encumbrance table, Morgan's 6 equipped items put her at movement rate 60' (20') and her 4 packed items at 120' (40'). She thus has a movement rate of 60' (20')—the slower of the two.

## STR Modifier (Optional Rule)

A character's melee STR modifier (see *Ability Scores* in *Old-School Essentials*) may be applied to the number of packed items at each movement rate band. e.g. a character with STR 16 (+2 modifier) can carry up to 12 packed items at 120' (40').

### Adventuring Gear Item-Based Encumbrance

Item	Encumbrance
Backpack	1 (storage)
Crowbar	1
Garlic	0 (tiny)
Grappling hook	1
Hammer (small)	1
Holy symbol	0 (tiny)
Holy water (vial)	1
Iron spikes (12)	1
Lantern	1
Mirror (hand-sized, steel)	1
Oil (1 flask)	1
Pole (10' long, wooden)	2
Rations (iron, 7 days)	3 (bundle)
Rations (standard, 7 days)	3 (bundle)
Rope (50')	1
Sack (large)	1 (storage)
Sack (small)	1 (storage)
Stakes (3) and mallet	2 (bundle)
Thieves' tools	1
Tinder box (flint & steel)	1
Torches (6)	2 (bundle)
Waterskin	1
Wine (2 pints)	1
Wolfsbane (1 bunch)	1

**Bundle:** Lists the item weight of the number of individual items in the bundle when bought (e.g. 7 rations = 3 items).

**Storage:** Only counts as an item when not in use. The referee must judge how much can be stored in a container.

**Tiny:** Not encumbering unless carried in large numbers.