

Unknown Title

5E Encumbrance by Stone

October 18th, 2021



This simplified method for handling encumbrance using an imprecise, medieval-mindset way of thinking about weight was originally designed in 2011 for OD&D and 3rd Edition. This version of the rules is fully adapted for 5th Edition.

Encumbrance, measured in stones carried, determines the load a character is currently carrying. A character's encumbrance can be normal, encumbered, or heavily encumbered. A character has a carrying capacity equal to their Strength in stones (which is the maximum weight they can carry), they are heavily encumbered if they are carrying more than two-thirds of this number (round down), and encumbered if they are carrying more than one-third this number (round down).

Each character has an encumbrance rule to keep track of these thresholds, which are precalculated on the table below. For example, a character with Strength 10 has an encumbrance rule of 10-6-3 (meaning they are encumbered when carrying 3 or more stones, heavily encumbered when carrying 6 or more stones, and cannot carry more than 10 stones).

Encumbered: An encumbered character's speed drops by 10 feet.

Heavily Encumbered: A heavily encumbered character's speed drops by 20 feet and they have disadvantage on ability checks, attack rolls, and saving throws that use Strength, Dexterity, or Constitution.

Push, Drag, or Lift: A character can push, drag, or lift up (without carrying) twice their carrying capacity. While pushing or dragging weight in excess of their carrying capacity, a character's speed drops to 5 feet.

Adjusting for Size: The encumbrance rule for a creature is doubled for each size category above Medium. The encumbrance rule is halved for Tiny creatures. (It is easiest to consider a Tiny creature as having half its Strength score for the purposes of calculating encumbrance, a Large creature to have double its Strength, and so forth.)

Variant – Quadrupeds: Quadrupeds can carry heavier loads and have an encumbrance rule equal to twice an equivalent biped.

WEIGHT BY STONE

To determine the number of stones carried by a character, simply consult the table below.

Item	Weight in Stones
Heavy Armor	4 stones
Medium Armor	2 stones
Light Armor	1 stone
Shield	½ stone
Weapon	½ stone
Weapon, light	Misc. Equipment
Ammunition	Misc. Equipment
Miscellaneous Equipment	1 stone per 5 bundles
Stowed Weapon	1 bundle
Heavy Item	1 or more stones
Light Clothing / Worn Item	0 stones
750 coins or gems	1 stone

Miscellaneous Equipment: Up to twenty items of the same type (scrolls, arrows, potions, rope) can be bundled together for the purposes of encumbrance, with five bundles being equal to 1 stone. Items of different types aren't bundled when determining encumbrance.

Stowed Weapons: Stowed weapons have been compactly stored in a way which makes them more difficult to draw (but easier to carry). Stowed weapons must be retrieved before they can be used, but they only count as 1 stone per 5 weapons.

Heavy Items: Anything weighing more than roughly 10 pounds can't be effectively bundled. Estimate a weight in stones (about 10-20 pounds to the stone). When in doubt, call it a stone.

Clothing / Worn Items: Worn items don't count for encumbrance, unless the individual items would qualify as heavy items.

CONTAINERS

Weapons are assumed to be in sheaths, armor is worn, and you might have a wineskin or two strapped to your belt. But since there's a limit to how much you can hold in your hands, everything else you're carrying needs a place to live. As a rule of thumb, containers can carry:

Container	Capacity
Pouch	½ stone
Sack	1 stone
Backpack	2 stones
Backpack, Large	4 stones

Empty containers count as miscellaneous equipment. Containers being used to carry items don't count towards encumbrance.

Larger sacks (often referred to as "loot sacks") are also possible, but these cannot generally be stored on the body. They must be carried in both hands.

VARIANT – CREATURE WEIGHT BY SIZE

Your own weight does not count against your encumbrance, but these figures are important for mounts. (They'll also come in handy if you need to carry a corpse or prisoner.)

Creature Size Weight in Stones

Tiny	1 stone
Small	2 stones
Medium	12 stones
Large	100 stones
Huge	800 stones
Gargantuan	6,400 stones

These figures are meant to serve as a useful rule of thumb, being roughly accurate for creatures similar in build and type to humans (i.e. fleshy humanoids). There will, however, be significant variance within each size category. Even typical animals of Huge size, for example, can easily range anywhere from 400 stones to 3,000 stones. Creatures of unusual material can obviously shatter these assumptions entirely (ranging from light-as-air ether cloud fairies to impossibly dense neutronium golems).

ENCUMBRANCE RULES

Strength Encumbered Heavily Encumbered Carrying Capacity

1	0	½	1
2	0	1	2
3	1	2	3
4	1	2	4
5	1	3	5
6	2	4	6
7	2	4	7
8	2	5	8
9	3	6	9
10	3	6	10
11	3	7	11
12	4	8	12
13	4	8	13

Strength Encumbered Heavily Encumbered Carrying Capacity

14	4	9	14
15	5	10	15
16	5	10	16
17	5	11	17
18	6	12	18
19	6	12	19
20	6	13	20
21	7	14	21
22	7	14	22
23	7	15	23
24	8	16	24
25	8	16	25
26	8	17	26
27	9	18	27
28	9	18	28
29	9	19	29
30	10	20	30

Part 2: The Sheet

Filed under: [Roleplaying Games Comments \(20\)](#) Article tags: [5th edition](#), [d&d](#), [encumbrance by stone](#)

20 Responses to “5E Encumbrance by Stone”

1. *David* says:



“ Up to twenty items of the same type (scrolls, arrows, potions, rope) can be bundled together for the purposes of encumbrance “

This is a bit confusing, twenty coils of rope are equal to 1/5th of a stone? Or did you mean something else by that? It's also a little weird to me that potions can bundle like that. Do they need to be identical potions?

October 19th, 2021 - 1:06 pm

2. *LordLucide* says:



In my experience, weighing things into stones does effectively nothing. Just as with slots, you still have to know how much an item weighs and keep track of everything, same as if you weighed everything with pounds. It doesn't actually change anything but the terminology, which is now a step away from common language and something the players are already familiar with.

October 19th, 2021 - 7:06 pm

3. *Justin Alexander* says:



@LordLucide: If you're trying to figure exactly how much an item weighs in a system where you specifically **do not do that**, something has gone wrong.

@David: You are also attempting to precisely weigh items. Don't do that. The whole point of the system is to not do that.

October 20th, 2021 - 11:25 am

4. *Steve* says: 


These "simplified" rules take a lot more words to explain than the rules in the players handbook. I see what the goal is, but as has been pointed out, its just switching to a smaller scale really. I don't see this as any more engaging a system to interact with.

October 20th, 2021 - 12:44 pm

5. *Cruiser* says: 

Buncha people who can't read in the comments today.

October 20th, 2021 - 1:22 pm

6. *Zzzloy* says: 

The table for clothes indicates weight of 1 stone, and in the text below, it says that worn items don't count for encumbrance. Is there a contradiction here?

Thank you for your work and sorry for my English.

October 20th, 2021 - 3:36 pm

7. *Justin Alexander* says: 


@Zzzloy: Good catch! I've fixed this.

I've mentioned this previously, but tables frequently accumulate errors on the Alexandrian because I often have to retype them. I appreciate everyone helping to catch these errors so that they can be corrected!

@Cruiser: That's unnecessarily rude. It is interesting to see how tightly people cling to the perceived "need" to count every ounce as if they were NASA scientists kitting out a satellite, but being rude doesn't solve anything.

Speaking more generally: If you're happy counting every single ounce, you should just stick with the system where you count every ounce. This system is **explicitly about not doing that**. Take a second to really think about that. See what happens if you change your paradigm.

October 20th, 2021 - 9:48 pm

8. *David* says: 

@Justin Alexander

I get you're not supposed to precisely weigh items, but I am still confused as to how 20 50' coils of rope, each weighing 10 pounds, bundles into one fifth of a stone. I'm fine with it being fuzzy and loose, but this just seemed like a mistake? "Rope" just seems like a different category of object than "an arrow".

October 20th, 2021 - 10:49 pm

9. *Sableheart* says:



@David

the problem is that you likely won't have 20 50' coils of rope. You'll start with 150' of rope. Then you cut of 30' to tie up a prisoner. When you release the prisoner, you have 2 coils of rope, 1 30', 1 120' long. Then you'll descent a 40' cliff, where you decide to leave the rope used hanging to allow a fast retreat. So you cut of another 50', and are only carrying a 30' and 70' rope.

This means that rope is similar to other bundled items, in the sense that you'll have different quantities of it, and that you want an easy way to estimate it's weight.

The trick is to choose the length of rope that consists of 1 part of a bundle of 20 such that you're happy with the estimation. I would consider using 5 feet of rope for that, meaning you can have 100 ft of rope in a bundle.

October 21st, 2021 - 1:04 am

10. *Sableheart* says:



Thinking about it some more, 20 ft of hempen rope to a bundle would probably work better: 5 bundles of rope (a stone) would be 100ft, which would weigh 20 lbs according to 5th edition rules.

Then silk rope is 50 ft to a bundle.

October 21st, 2021 - 1:11 am

11. *Wyvern* says:



I think it would be more intuitive if the encumbrance rule was reversed: 3-6-10 instead of 10-6-3.

October 21st, 2021 - 11:07 am

12. *Phase* says:



If I'm reading this right, most fully kitted adventurers will be at or over their encumbered limit just from the gear they would normally have on them.

A 16 STR (5 stone enc) fighter in heavy armor (4 stone) and a longsword (1/2 stone) and shield (1/2) is already maxed out. If they want to carry a backup ranged weapon like javelins or a light crossbow that puts them over, and so will a backpack of general adventuring gear (up to 2 stone).

A 10 STR (3 stone enc) rogue would have 2 stone just from their light armor, rapier, and shortbow, then their backpack of adventuring gear and thieves' tools would push them over.

An 8 STR (2 stone enc) wizard would only have a quarterstaff (1/2 stone) and spellbook (1/2 stone? maybe?), and might not be encumbered depending on how much stuff is in their backpack.

Basically it seems like the system encourages carrying the barest minimum, throwing your bags on a pack animal or pet, or dropping your backpack when initiative is rolled if you want your full movement speed.

October 21st, 2021 - 11:36 am

13. *Justin Alexander* says:



@Phase: The system is calibrated to get results broadly similar to the 5E rules for encumbrance.

Take your rogue example: By 5E rules, 50 lbs. would make them encumbered.

You list light armor (10 lbs.), rapier (2 lbs.), shortbow (2 lbs.), thieves tools (1 lb.), and... let's say a burglar's pack (42.5 lbs.)? So 57.5 pounds.

Eyeballing your other examples, I'm pretty sure you'll find that they'll similarly be encumbered (or near it) in 5E regardless. It's certainly possible to construct examples that will have different outcomes in each system, but the expectations are not radically different.

October 21st, 2021 - 12:19 pm

14. *Wyvern* says:



"Basically it seems like the system encourages carrying the barest minimum, throwing your bags on a pack animal or pet, or dropping your backpack when initiative is rolled if you want your full movement speed."

I'd consider that a feature, not a bug. I think we've all been conditioned by CPRGs to accept adventurers carting around massive amounts of stuff, no matter how ridiculously implausible. Real-life soldiers in modern militaries often do have to carry pretty substantial packs — but they're not trying to fight with swords and maces at the same time.

When I Googled "how much does a soldier's gear weigh", this was one of the first results: <https://www.popularmechanics.com/military/research/a25644619/soldier-weight/>. It seems extremely relevant, because it includes historical figures from several different eras for comparison. To summarize, 75-80 lb of gear was considered a significant load all the way from Ancient Rome to WWII. If 1 stone ~ 15 lb, a Str 16 fighter (well above average) would have an encumbrance threshold of 75 lb.

October 21st, 2021 - 4:42 pm

15. *Steve* says:



I don't think there is a need to count every pound but I think this system is adding complexity without much benefit. 20 items per bundle, 5 bundle per stone, 1 third my Str to stay unencumbered. Lots of weird edge cases like if I carry 100 items in 5 varieties it's 1 stone but if I carry 16 unique items it's 3 stone. Why? If you are creating things on a new scale, why set it so you are immediately dealing with fractions with your half stone shield and sword?

If you bumped up your scale and had Str, 2xStr and 3xStr as your limits you could do everything in whole numbers and bundle 5 or 10 items into 1 slot.

October 21st, 2021 - 5:24 pm


16. *Mark Jelfo* says: 

Love this system. I think making an easy-to-use Encumbrance System will help to reintroduce the value of Strength. One thing I'm hung up on, though is the definition of when someone is Encumbered ("...if they are carrying more than one-third this number") in comparison to the table.

The table lists a character with 12 Strength being encumbered at 4, yet the definition of being encumbered is for a value *above* that number. I think the table might be more intuitive if the Encumbered and Heavily Encumbered values added one to them. Otherwise, unless I just haven't had enough coffee this morning, the values listed are equal-to the thresholds for being Encumbered or Heavily Encumbered.


As a thought, what do you think packs or kits would be weighed as? 1/2 stone and 1 stone respectively? I think that's the first question my players would ask.

October 28th, 2021 - 5:57 am

17. *John* says: 

I'm wondering if you bundle rations / water in the same way? Rations weigh 2lbs, so a binder of 20 would be 40lbs.

December 15th, 2021 - 12:05 pm

18. *Caleb* says: 

There's something here that seems just a little inconsistent. I love the rules and want to use them, but I need to clear this up before I can:

It appears that the rules account for smaller and larger creatures well enough, but the armor and weapons do not. That inconsistency causes big problems for halflings and dwarves who want to wear heavy armor. Heavy armor fitted for them shouldn't weigh nearly as much as heavy armor for a human. Right?

And the penalty carries out in practice; I'm a dwarf cleric with heavy armor, STR 15. In this RAW I'm "encumbered" just with my armor, nearly "heavily encumbered", but if I was a human I could wear heavy armor and only be approaching "encumbered".

Maybe the argument is that the weight to size ratio is in favor of being larger for heavy armor? But I'd like it more if we take size into account for the creature, we also account for that with armor and weapons.

July 25th, 2022 - 11:20 am

19. *Caleb* says:



I just realized my mistake in my comment. Worn items don't count. But still, the problem persists if we just want to take our armor off and carry it with us.

July 25th, 2022 - 11:23 am

20. *Crimson Wool* says:



@Caleb:

Halflings are not Tiny, they're Small. (Dwarves are just Medium.) PC races generally aren't Tiny.

September 26th, 2022 - 6:01 pm

Leave a Reply