

COMBAT

When the heroes face a problem that can be solved only with action, or when they come up against creatures who want to harm them, it's time to throw down!

Set the Map

When combat begins, the Director should position miniatures or tokens on a gridded map to represent the environment, the heroes, their foes, and any other creatures in the battle.

How Big is a Square?

It's helpful to know how big a square is for abilities and features that heroes and NPCs can use outside of combat. By default, a square is 5 feet on all sides. But the Director can change this measurement to 2 yards, 2 meters, 1 meter, or any other measurement you prefer, as long as that scale stays consistent throughout your game.

Size and Space

A creature's size indicates how many squares they occupy during combat, which defines the creature's space. If a creature's size is 1, they occupy a space of 1 square. If a creature is larger than 1 square, their size equals the number of squares they take up in length, width, and height. For example, a horse has a size of 2, which means that during combat, they occupy a space that is 2 squares long, 2 squares wide, and 2 squares high. You could also think of that space as a cube that is 2 squares on all sides.

The minimum amount of space a creature can take up during combat is 1 square, but size 1 creatures can run the range from tiny pixies to small polders, medium humans, and large hakaan. As such, for creatures of size 1, that size is further broken down as 1T, 1S, 1M, or 1L—abbreviations for tiny, small, medium, and large. Size 1T is one size smaller than size 1S, two sizes smaller than 1M, three sizes smaller than 1L, and four sizes smaller than size 2. If a mechanic mentions size 1 creatures, that mechanic applies to all creatures of size 1.

Objects also have a size rating, which usually indicates how many squares they occupy. Some objects are identified as having an irregular size, with that size instead representing the object's mass and weight relative to a creature of the same size. If a mechanic mentions objects of a certain size, that mechanic includes all objects of that size, including irregular objects.

The Creature Sizes table shows example sizes for creatures up to size 5, but larger sizes are possible. There is no limit to what a creature's size might be.

◆ Creature Size ◆

Size	Example Creature
1T	Pixie
1S	Polder
1M	Human
1L	Hakaan
2	Ogre
3	Shambling mound
4	Hill giant
5	Omen dragon

Sides

Every combat encounter is a conflict between two sides. The heroes and any of their allies are one side, controlled by the players. Any creatures who oppose the heroes are the other side, controlled by the Director. All creatures who oppose the heroes are on the same side, even if those creatures also oppose each other. For example, if the heroes are battling a group of bandits when a kingfissure worm suddenly bursts into the fray to devour player characters and brigands alike, the worm is still on the side of the bandits for the purpose of the game's combat rules.

NPC Allies

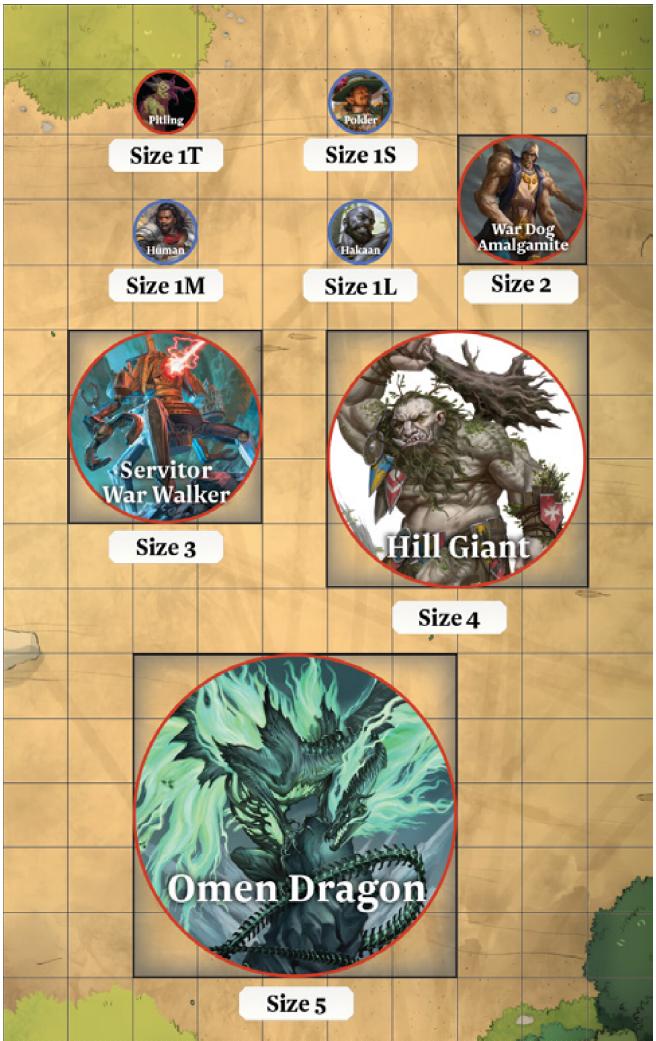
If an NPC ally fights alongside the heroes, the Director should give the players the ally's stat block and let them control the NPC during combat. The Director has enough to worry about. As well, any missteps, mistakes, or triumphs the ally makes will be thanks to the decisions of the players and not the Director, which can make the outcome of the battle more satisfying for the players.

Combat Round

Combat takes place over a series of combat rounds. During a combat round, each creature in the battle takes a turn. Once every creature has taken a turn, a new round begins.

When Does Combat Start?

Combat starts as soon as one creature intends to harm another, or when some environmental effect is in a position to deal damage to or impose other negative effects on one or more creatures. This means that even before the action happens, a hero can't use a heroic ability without spending their Heroic Resource on it, because combat has already begun!



Determine Surprise

When battle starts, the Director determines which creatures, if any, are caught off guard. Any creature who isn't ready for combat at the start of an encounter is surprised until the end of the first combat round. A surprised creature can't take triggered actions or free triggered actions, and ability rolls made against them gain an edge.

For example, if the heroes sneak up unnoticed on a camp of marauders and attack, each marauder is surprised. Likewise, if the heroes fail to notice that all the cloaked figures in a tavern are actually brain-devouring zombies, then the heroes are surprised. If one of the heroes notices the disguised undead before the zombies attack but has no opportunity to warn their allies, that hero isn't surprised but the rest of the characters are.

Determine Who Goes First

Sometimes figuring out who gets to take the first turn in combat is automatic. If all the creatures on one side are surprised, then a creature on the other side gets to act first. But if both sides have creatures who aren't surprised, the Director or a player they choose rolls a d10. On a 6 or higher, the players determine who goes first—the heroes' side or the other side. Otherwise, the Director decides which side goes first.

Creatures Take Turns

Whichever side goes first chooses a creature (or sometimes a group of creatures on the Director's side) to act at the start of combat. Whenever the rules talk about a creature acting in combat, that creature gets to take their turn. When that turn is over, the other side chooses a creature to act. Play continues back and forth this way as each creature takes their turn.

Unless an ability or special rule allows them to do so, any creature who has taken a turn during a combat round can't act again until a new round begins. To help track which creatures have already acted in the current round, each creature can have a coin, token, or card they flip over on the table, or some kind of flag they set on their virtual tabletop token, once they've taken a turn. That way, all the players know who has already acted and who hasn't.

In many encounters, a point comes when one side has creatures who haven't acted yet but all the creatures on the other side have. The creatures who have yet to act get to take their turns in any order they choose, without turns in between from the other side. For example, consider four heroes taking on six enemies. When all four heroes have taken their turns and four of the enemies have taken theirs, the two enemies who are left take their turns one after the other to end the round.

DETERMINING WHO ACTS NEXT

When it comes to the heroes' side, the choice of who should act next is intended to give players the opportunity to comment, strategize, and plan. Some tables, in some encounters, might find that the choice of who should act next isn't obvious, leading to debate. That's fine. Deliberating about what the group should do next is classic roleplaying.

In general, though, most groups find that it's usually only one or two players in a given round who think it best if they act next. And as soon as those players explain why they want to act next and what they plan on doing, the issue is quickly resolved.

ARGUMENT TIMER

If the players do end up arguing in circles about what to do next, the Director can place a timer on the discussion. Usually, giving the players a warning and 30 seconds to decide who goes next does the trick. If they can't choose by the end of that time, the Director chooses a hero to act.

Alternative Turn Order

If planning everyone's turn order isn't fun for your group, you can leave it to the dice instead. At the start of combat, have each hero, enemy, and group of enemies make an Agility test, then record the totals. When it's time for someone on the heroes' side to act, the hero with the highest total goes first. On the next hero turn, the hero with the second-highest total takes their turn, and so on. The Director-controlled creatures act the same way. Creatures on the same side should reroll tied Agility tests to determine who among the tied creatures acts before the others.

At the Director's discretion, a hero can swap their turn in the order with another willing hero at the start of a new combat round. This allows certain abilities that interact with the core turn order system, such as the shadow's Hesitation Is Weakness ability, to better work with this alternative system.

ENEMIES ACT IN GROUPS

Director-controlled creatures act in groups, with information for building groups found in *Draw Steel: Monsters*. When a group of enemies acts, the Director chooses a single creature or minion squad to take a turn. Once that turn is over, the Director chooses another creature in that group to take a turn, continuing until all members of the group have taken their turn.

End of Round

Once all creatures on both sides of a battle have acted, the combat round ends and a new combat round begins. The side whose members acted first during the initial combat round goes first in all subsequent rounds.

Taking a Turn

Each creature in combat—whether hero, adversary, or something in between—gets to take a **main action**, a **maneuver**, and a **move action** on their turn (explained later in this chapter). Each combatant can perform their maneuver and main action in any order, and can break up the movement granted by their move action before, after, or between their maneuver and main action however they like. You can also turn your main action into a move action or a maneuver, so that your turn can alternatively consist of two move actions and a maneuver, or two maneuvers and a move action.

The [Movement](#) section below breaks down how your move action works, while the [Maneuvers](#) and [Main Actions](#) sections break down the baseline maneuvers and main actions your character can undertake. For any activities not specifically covered in those rules, such as cutting down a chandelier to drop on enemies, the Director decides whether such an activity is a maneuver or a main action.

Triggered Actions and Free Triggered Actions

Your hero might have one or more unique triggered actions, each of which has a specified trigger that allows the action to be used. You can use one triggered action per round, either on your turn or another creature's turn, but only when the action's trigger occurs. For instance, a fury hero can use the Lines of Force triggered action to force move a target, but only after an enemy has first tried to force move the fury or another nearby creature.

A free triggered action follows the same rules as a triggered action, but it doesn't count against your limit of one triggered action per round. For instance, a shadow hero can use their Hesitation Is Weakness ability to take their turn in response to the trigger of another hero ending their turn. But because that ability is a free triggered action, the shadow can still use their In All This Confusion triggered action later in the round.

If multiple triggered actions occur in response to the same trigger, any heroes and other player-controlled creatures taking a triggered action or a free triggered action decide among themselves which of those triggered actions are resolved first. Then the Director decides the same for creatures they control.

Any effect that prevents you from using triggered actions also prevents you from using free triggered actions.

Free Maneuvers

Boring stuff like opening an unlocked door, picking up an arrow from the ground, giving an object to an adjacent ally, or drawing a weapon doesn't require a maneuver or a main action. Rather, you can undertake such straightforward activities as free maneuvers on your turn. A free maneuver follows the same rules as a regular maneuver, but you can typically take as many free maneuvers as you like.

At the Director's discretion, circumstances could make something that is typically boring more impactful and exciting. For instance, if you need to pick a magic arrow up off the ground during a violent earthquake, what would otherwise be a free maneuver could require a maneuver or a main action to accomplish.

Likewise, the nature of an activity might make it too complicated for a free maneuver. For example, picking up the body of an unconscious talent ally to carry them to safety can probably be done as a free maneuver. But if your Might is lacking and you need to pick up a tactician ally decked out in the Shining Armor kit, the Director might determine that you need to use a regular maneuver to hoist their armored form over your shoulders.

Any effect that prevents you from using maneuvers also prevents you from using free maneuvers.

No-Action Activities

Free maneuvers cover most of the simple activities you might want to undertake on your turn. When it isn't your turn, you can typically undertake even simpler activities requiring no action with the Director's approval. For instance, shouting out a warning to an ally or dropping an item so another creature can pick it up require no action.

The Director can limit what kinds of no-action activities you can attempt when it isn't your turn. For instance, shouting out a warning about an unseen foe to an ally on the ally's or the foe's turn requires no action. But the Director might stop you from giving that ally complex tactical advice when it isn't your turn, saying that doing so instead requires a free maneuver on your turn.

Movement

During combat, creatures can employ multiple mechanics that allow them to move around the battlefield. The most common of those mechanics is the Advance or Disengage move action (detailed under [Move Actions](#) below), but abilities granted by your class, equipment, ancestry, title, or other options might allow you other ways to move.

Your hero starts with a speed granted by their ancestry—usually 5. This represents the maximum number of squares you can move when you take the Advance move action or when another effect allows you to move. Your speed can be increased by your kit and other game options.

All squares adjacent to your character cost 1 movement to move into. No, there's no Pythagorean theorem on the grid. It's a game, don't overthink it.

Your hero can move freely through an ally's space. You can move through an enemy's space, but that space is difficult terrain (see below). You can't stop moving in any other creature's space, including to make a strike or use a main action or maneuver while in that space and then continuing your move, unless that creature's size is two or more sizes greater or smaller than your own.

At the Director's discretion, you can be forced into the same space as another creature whose size is within 1 of yours, such as by falling down a narrow shaft with such a creature already at the bottom. When you are squeezed into the same space as another creature whose size is within 1 of yours, your ability rolls and tests take a bane.

Can't Exceed Speed

A single move or other effect can never allow a creature to move more squares than their speed, unless the effect states otherwise. For example, a creature with speed 5 might have that speed reduced to 2 by the slowed condition (see [Conditions](#) in [Chapter 5: Classes](#)). If an ally then targets them with an effect that allows them to move up to 3 squares, the creature can move only 2 squares because that's their current speed.

Can't Cut Corners

A creature can't move diagonally when doing so would involve passing through the corner of a wall or some other object that completely fills the corner between the creature's space and the space they are moving to. This rule applies only to moving past objects, not moving past other creatures.

Cut Corners

The tactician moves 3 squares to exit the building without cutting corners. The war dog eviscerite can't move around the side of the building in just 2 squares of movement, since they'd have to cut a corner to do so.

Shifting

Shifting is a careful form of movement that allows a creature to move safely past dangerous foes. Certain abilities, features, and other rules allow you to shift a specific number of squares, sometimes up to your speed. Whenever you shift, creatures can't make opportunity attacks against you triggered by that movement (see [Line](#) later in this chapter).

You can't shift into or while within difficult terrain or damaging terrain (see below). If a rule allows you to shift, you can choose to instead move up to the number of squares you would have shifted (for example, to get out of difficult terrain). However, you can't combine moving and shifting within that movement.

Movement Types

Creatures in the game can use eight types of movement: walk, burrow, climb, swim, jump, crawl, fly, and teleport.

WALK

Walking is the most common movement type, whether it refers to ambulating on legs, rolling, slithering, or some other default method of movement. Unless specified otherwise, all creatures can move over solid horizontal ground without any problem.

BURROW

A creature who has "burrow" in their speed entry, or who gains the temporary ability to burrow, can move through dirt horizontally, and either has the means to breathe while doing so or doesn't require air to live. Such creatures can't move through more solid ground, such as stone, unless their stat block or the effect that lets them burrow says otherwise. Similarly, a burrowing creature doesn't leave a tunnel unless the rules say so.

Dig Maneuver

It takes extra effort to dig vertically through the ground as opposed to tunneling horizontally, requiring a creature to use a special maneuver. To use the Dig maneuver, a creature must have "burrow" in their speed entry, they must have a speed that is equal to or greater than their size, and they must be touching terrain that can be burrowed through.

When a creature uses the Dig maneuver, they can move vertically up to a number of squares equal to their size. If a burrowing creature has a creature who is not unconscious grabbed, they can't willingly move deeper into the ground. It's too difficult to dig with a flailing enemy in your claws.

Targeting Burrowing Creatures

If you are on the ground, you have line of effect to a burrowing creature if that creature occupies 1 or more squares of terrain that can be burrowed through and that touch the ground, and if you have line of effect to any of those squares. The burrowing creature gains the benefit of cover from you.

If you are completely beneath the ground while burrowing, you don't have line of effect to any creature on the surface unless a rule states otherwise.

If you are completely beneath the ground while burrowing and are adjacent to another creature who is burrowing, you have line of effect to that creature, though you both have cover from each other.

You can't gain the benefit of high ground (see below) against creatures who are completely beneath the ground while burrowing.

Non-Burrowing Creatures

If you are on the ground and adjacent to a creature who is beneath the ground while burrowing, you can use a maneuver to pull that creature up 1 square out of the ground, provided the creature is willing.

If a creature who can't burrow wants to dig into the ground, they can use the following ability provided their speed is 2 or more.

Claw Dirt

—
Self

Maneuver

Self

Power Roll + Might:

- ≤11 You can move 1 square into, out of, or through ground you are touching that can be burrowed through, and you are slowed and weakened (EoT).
- 12-16 You can use your main action this turn to move 1 square into, out of, or through ground you are touching that can be burrowed through, and you are slowed (EoT).
- 17+ You can move 1 square into, out of, or through ground you are touching that can be burrowed through.

Burrowing Forced Movement

While a creature who is completely beneath the ground while burrowing is force moved by movement that isn't vertical, they aren't moved, and they take 1 damage for each square they would have been force moved. If the forced movement is vertical, the creature is moved through the dirt as if it were air.

CLIMB OR SWIM

A creature who has “climb” in their speed entry, or who gains the temporary ability to automatically climb, can climb across vertical and horizontal surfaces at full speed. Likewise, a creature who has “swim” in their speed entry, or who gains the temporary ability to automatically swim, can swim in liquid at full speed.

Creatures without those types of movement can still climb or swim when a rule allows them to move, but each square of climbing or swimming costs 2 squares of movement. If a surface is difficult to climb (for instance, a sheer cliff or ice-covered wall) or a liquid is hard to swim through (a raging river or whirlpool), the Director can call for a Might test. On a failure, a creature can’t climb or swim but wastes no movement in the attempt. The Director can also impose other consequences to failure, such as being caught in the spinning current of a whirlpool.

Climbing Other Creatures

You can attempt to climb a creature whose size is greater than yours. If the creature is willing, you can climb them without any trouble. If the creature is unwilling, you make the following test:

Power Roll + Might or Agility:

- ≤11 You fail to climb the creature, and they can make a free strike against you.
- 12-16 You fail to climb the creature.
- 17+ You climb the creature.

While you climb or ride a creature, you gain an edge on melee abilities used against them. The creature can use a maneuver to attempt to knock you off, forcing you to make the following test:

Power Roll + Might or Agility:

- ≤11 You fall off the creature into an unoccupied adjacent space of your choice, taking falling damage and landing prone as usual.
- 12-16 You slide down the creature into an unoccupied adjacent space of your choice and don’t land prone.
- 17+ You continue to hold on to the creature.

If you are knocked prone while climbing or riding a creature, you fall and land prone in an adjacent space of your choice, taking damage as usual from the fall.

JUMP

Whenever an effect allows you to move (including using the Advance move action), you can automatically long jump a number of squares up to your Might or Agility score (your choice; minimum 1 square) as part of that movement. The height of your jump is automatically 1 square as part of that movement.

If you want to jump even longer or higher than your baseline jump allows, make a Might or Agility test:

Power Roll + Might or Agility:

- ≤11 You don’t jump any farther than your baseline jump allows.
- 12-16 You jump 1 square longer and higher than your baseline jump allows.
- 17+ You jump 2 squares longer and higher than your baseline jump allows.

You can’t jump farther or higher than the distance of the effect that allows you to move. You can’t jump out of difficult terrain or damaging terrain (see below).

CRAWL

If you are prone (see [Conditions](#) in [Chapter 5: Classes](#)), you can remain prone and crawl on the ground. Doing so costs you 1 additional square of movement for every square you crawl. If you intentionally want to crawl, you can fall prone as a free maneuver. While voluntarily prone, you can choose to stand as a free maneuver.

FLY

A creature who has “fly” in their speed entry, or who gains the temporary ability to fly, can move through the air vertically or horizontally at full speed and remain in midair. If a flying creature is knocked prone or has their speed reduced to 0, they fall (see [Falling](#) below).

HOVER

A creature who has “hover” in their speed entry (most commonly alongside “fly” or “teleport”), or who gains the temporary ability to hover, can remain motionless in midair. They don’t fall even if they are knocked prone or their speed is reduced to 0.

TELEPORT

When a creature teleports, they move from one space to another space instantaneously. The following rules apply to teleporting:

- Teleporting doesn’t provoke opportunity attacks or other effects that are triggered by a creature moving.
- When a creature teleports, they bypass any obstacles between the space they leave and their destination space.
- A creature teleporting themselves must have line of effect to their destination space. A creature teleporting another creature must have line of effect from the space the teleported creature leaves and to their destination space.
- A teleporting creature’s destination space can’t be occupied by another creature or object.
- The effect that lets a creature teleport indicates how far they can teleport. That distance can be greater than the creature’s speed.
- If a creature can teleport as part of their usual movement, they can use the Advance move action to teleport a number of squares up to their usual speed, unmodified by conditions or effects.
- If a creature teleports while prone, they can be standing when they reach their destination space provided they are able to stand. If a prone creature is teleported by another creature, it is up to that creature whether the teleported creature remains prone or stands if they are able.
- If you teleport while affected by the grabbed or restrained conditions, those conditions end for you.
- When a creature teleports, they must leave the space where they start and enter a new space. A creature can’t teleport to and from the same space.

Falling

When a creature falls 2 or more squares and lands on the ground, they take 2 damage for each square they fall (to a maximum of 50 damage) and land prone. A creature who falls can reduce the effective height of the fall by a number of squares equal to their Agility score (to a minimum of 0). Falling into liquid that is 1 square or more deep reduces the effective height of a fall by 4 squares (to a minimum of 0).

Falling is not forced movement, but being force moved downward is considered falling. Movement from falling doesn’t provoke opportunity attacks.

FALLING ONTO ANOTHER CREATURE

A creature who falls and lands on another creature causes that creature to take the same damage from the fall. The falling creature then lands prone in the nearest unoccupied space of their choice. If the falling creature's size is greater than the Might score of the creature they land on, that creature is knocked prone.

FALLING FAR

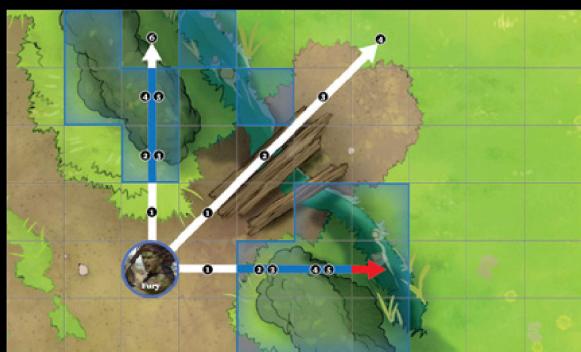
When a creature first falls from a great height, they fall 100 squares in the first round. At the end of each subsequent round that they remain falling, they fall another 100 squares.

Difficult Terrain

Areas of thick underbrush, rubble, spiderwebs, or other obstacles to movement create difficult terrain. It costs 1 additional square of movement to enter a square of difficult terrain.

Damaging Terrain

Areas of acid, fire, sharp rocks, lava, or any other terrain that causes damage to creatures within it is damaging terrain. The damage dealt by damaging terrain is noted in the terrain's description or in the description of the effect that creates the terrain.



Difficult Terrain

A fury with speed 6 takes the Advance move action across a field with water and bushes that create difficult terrain (indicated by the blue squares on the map). Each highlighted path indicates how many squares of movement they must use while moving through or avoiding difficulty terrain. Their movement can't exceed 6 squares.

High Ground

Whenever a creature uses an ability to target a creature or object while standing on the ground and occupying a space that is fully above the target's space, they gain an edge on the power roll against that target. To be fully above a target, the bottom of a creature's space must be higher than or bordering on the top of the target's space.

A creature can gain this benefit while climbing only if they have "climb" in their speed entry or can automatically climb at full speed while moving.

Forced Movement

Some actions and maneuvers allow a creature to push, pull, or slide a target creature or object a specific distance across the battlefield. Collectively, these types of movement are called forced movement.

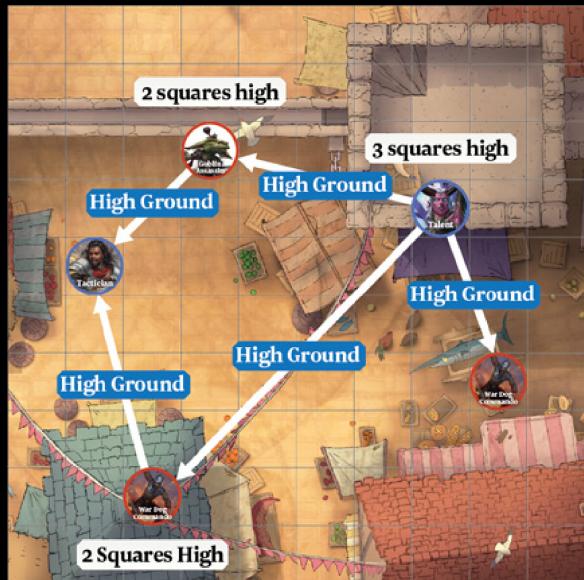
Push X: The creature moves the target up to X squares away from them in a straight line, without moving them vertically. Each square the creature moves the target must put the target farther away from them.

Pull X: The creature moves the target up to X squares toward them in a straight line, without moving them vertically. Each square the creature moves the target must bring the target closer to them.

Slide X: The creature moves the target up to X squares in any direction, except for vertically. Unlike a push or a pull, a slide doesn't need to be a straight line.

When you force move a target, you can always move that target fewer squares than the number indicated. For example, when the conduit obtains a tier 3 "push 3" outcome with their Call the Thunder Down ability, they can push targets any distance up to 3 squares, including choosing to not move certain targets at all.

Forced movement ignores difficult terrain and never provokes opportunity attacks. When you force move a target into damaging terrain or into terrain that produces an effect, they are affected as if they had moved into it willingly.



High Ground

The talent stands atop a 3-square-high tower, which is higher than any other creature. They gain an edge on all power rolls made against their enemies in the diagram. The goblin assassin and war dog commando stand on structures that are 2 squares high. They gain an edge on ability rolls against the tactician, who is standing on the ground, but not against the talent.

Multitarget Abilities and Forced Movement

Some creatures can force move multiple creatures or objects with a single ability. Unless the ability specifies otherwise, the creature using the ability determines the order in which the targets are force moved. The creature should select each target individually and complete their forced movement before force moving the next target affected.

VERTICAL

If a forced movement effect has the word “vertical” in front of it, then the forced movement can move a target up or down in addition to horizontally. For example, if a forced movement effect says “vertical push 5,” then a creature targeted by the effect can be pushed up to 5 squares in any direction, as long as the forced movement is a straight line.

If a creature who can’t fly is left in midair at the end of a vertical forced move, they fall. Forced movement made against a creature who is flying is always a vertical forced move, whether or not the effect specifies it.

Though you can’t freely push, pull, or slide a target up and down unless that forced movement specifies “vertical,” you can move them along a physical slope such as a hill or staircase. For a target to be force moved along a slope, each square of the slope can be no more than 1 square higher or lower than the previous square.

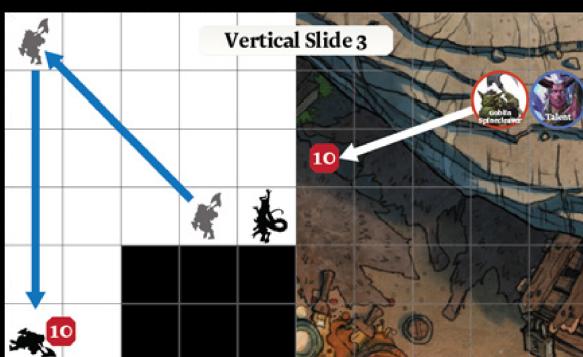
BIG VERSUS LITTLE

When a larger creature force moves a smaller target with a melee weapon ability, the distance of the forced movement is increased by 1. If a smaller creature force moves a larger target with a melee weapon ability, the distance doesn’t change.

SLAMMING INTO CREATURES

When you force move a creature into another creature, the movement ends and both creatures take 1 damage for each square remaining in the first creature’s forced movement. You can also force move an object into a creature. The object’s movement ends, and the creature takes 1 damage for each square remaining in the object’s forced movement.

Vertical Slide 3



Vertical Forced Movement

The talent vertically slides the goblin spinecleaver 3 squares up into the air and off of a cliff. The goblin falls 5 squares, taking 10 damage and landing prone from the fall.



Forced Movement

The fury pushes a war dog commando 2 squares. The censor pulls a commando 2 squares. The elementalist slides a commando 2 squares. Each commando can end up anywhere in the indicated area of their forced movement on the diagram.

It’s possible to move a creature or object of a larger size into several creatures of a smaller size at the same time. When this happens, the larger creature in the collision takes damage only once, not once for each smaller creature they slam into.

If a creature is killed by damage from an ability or effect that also force moves them, a second creature they are slammed into still takes damage unless the Director deems otherwise.

You can force move another creature into yourself with a pull or a slide.

Slamming Into Creatures

The null slides a war dog commando 5 squares. The null force moves the commando 1 square and then slams them into another adjacent commando. The forced movement ends, and both commandos take 4 damage, since the forced movement still had 4 squares remaining when the commandos collided.

SLAMMING INTO OBJECTS

When a creature force moves a target into a stationary object that is the target's size or larger and the object doesn't break (see below), the movement ends and the target takes 2 damage plus 1 damage for each square remaining in their forced movement.

If you force move a creature downward into an object that doesn't break (including the ground), they also take falling damage as if they had fallen the distance force moved and their Agility score was 0 (see [Falling](#) above).

Tracking Object Forced-Movement Damage

At the Director's discretion, mundane objects that are force moved into creatures or other objects take damage as if they were creatures. Sturdy objects can take damage as follows before they are destroyed:

- ♦ Wood object: 3 damage for each square it occupies
- ♦ Stone object: 6 damage for each square it occupies
- ♦ Metal object: 9 damage for each square it occupies

More fragile objects are destroyed after taking any damage.

HURLING THROUGH OBJECTS

When you move a creature into a mundane object, the object can break depending on how many squares of forced movement remain. The cost of being slammed into an object is tied to the damage a target takes for being hurled through it:

- ♦ It costs 1 remaining square of forced movement to destroy 1 square of glass. The creature moved takes 3 damage.
- ♦ It costs 3 remaining squares of forced movement to destroy 1 square of wood. The creature moved takes 5 damage.
- ♦ It costs 6 remaining squares of forced movement to destroy 1 square of stone. The creature moved takes 8 damage.
- ♦ It costs 9 remaining squares of forced movement to destroy 1 square of metal. The creature moved takes 11 damage.



Hurling Through Objects

The null slides a war dog commando 5 squares. The null force moves the commando 1 square and then slams them into a thick wooden wall. The null forces the commando through the first square of the wall by using 3 squares of forced movement, resulting in the commando taking 5 damage. The commando still has 1 square of forced movement left, so they are pushed into the next square of the wall, which doesn't break but does result in the commando's forced moment ending and them taking another 3 damage: 1 for the square of forced movement leftover and 2 for colliding with an object.

If any forced movement remains after the object is destroyed, you can continue to move the creature who destroyed the object.

FORCED INTO A FALL

If you can't fly and are force moved across an open space that would cause you to fall, such as being pushed over the edge of a cliff, you continue moving the total distance you were moved first. If you are still in a position to fall when the forced movement ends, you fall.

STABILITY

Each creature has a stability that allows them to resist forced movement. When a creature is force moved, they can reduce that movement up to a number of squares equal to their stability. Heroes start with stability 0 and can increase their stability through ancestry, class, and kit options.

A creature's stability can't be less than 0, even when reduced by a penalty.

"WHEN A CREATURE MOVES ..."

Certain abilities and effects trigger when a creature moves into a particular area. Forced movement triggers these options unless otherwise noted, including an effect stating that a creature must willingly move to trigger it.

DEATH EFFECTS AND FORCED MOVEMENT

Some creatures have traits or abilities that trigger when they die or are reduced to 0 Stamina. If such a creature is reduced to 0 Stamina by damage from an ability or effect that also force moves them, the forced movement takes place before the triggered effect.

Move Actions

A move action allows a creature to move around the battlefield. Sometimes you'll already be exactly where you want to be so that you don't need to use a move action on your turn. That's okay! The decision to not move is just as tactical as the decision to move.

Advance

When a creature takes the Advance move action, they move a number of squares up to their speed. They can break up this movement with their maneuver and main action however they wish.

Disengage

When a creature takes the Disengage move action, they can shift 1 square. Certain class features, kits, and other rules allow a creature to shift more than 1 square when they disengage. A creature who does so can break up their shift with their maneuver and main action however they wish.

Ride

A creature can take the Ride move action only while mounted on another creature (see [Mounted Combat](#) below). When a creature takes the Ride move action, they cause their mount to move up to the mount's speed, taking the rider with them. Alternatively, a creature can use the Ride move action to have their mount use the Disengage move action as a free triggered action. A creature can use the Ride move action only once per round. A mounted creature can only have this move action applied to them once per round. This movement can be broken up with the rider's maneuver and main action however they wish.

Maneuvers

A maneuver typically involves less focus and exertion than a main action (see below). It can be an opportunity to move other creatures, drink a potion, or undertake similar activities.

Sometimes you might not have anything you can do with your maneuver. That's totally fine! Often, the best thing to do on your turn is take a main action and move on.

Aid Attack

A creature who uses the Aid Attack maneuver chooses an enemy adjacent to them. The next ability roll an ally makes against that enemy before the start of the aiding creature's next turn gains an edge.

Catch Breath

A creature who uses the Catch Breath maneuver spends a Recovery and regains Stamina equal to their recovery value. (See below for [Stamina](#). See [Recoveries](#) in [Chapter 1: The Basics](#).)

A creature who is dying (see [Dying and Death](#) in [Stamina](#) below) can't use the Catch Breath maneuver, but other creatures can help them spend Recoveries in other ways.

Escape Grab

A creature who is grabbed by another creature, an object, or an effect (see [Grab](#) below) can attempt to escape by using the following ability.

Escape Grab



Maneuver
Self

Power Roll + Might or Agility:

≤11 No effect.

12–16 You can escape the grab, but if you do, a creature who has you grabbed can make a melee free strike against you before you are no longer grabbed.

17+ You are no longer grabbed.

Effect: You take a bane on this maneuver if your size is smaller than the size of the creature, object, or effect that has you grabbed.

See [Conditions](#) in [Chapter 5: Classes](#) for information on the grabbed condition.

Grab

A creature seeking to keep a foe close and locked down can attempt to grab a creature using the following ability.

Grab



Maneuver
One creature

Power Roll + Might:

≤11 No effect.

12–16 You can grab the target, but if you do, the target can make a melee free strike against you before they are grabbed.

17+ The target is grabbed by you.

Effect: You can usually target only creatures of your size or smaller. If your Might score is 2 or higher, you can target any creature with a size equal to or less than your Might score.

Unless otherwise indicated, a creature can grab only one creature at a time.

See [Conditions](#) in [Chapter 5: Classes](#) for information on the grabbed condition.

Hide

Using the Hide maneuver, a creature attempts to hide from other creatures who aren't observing them while they have cover or concealment. See [Hide and Sneak](#) in [Chapter 9: Tests](#) for full details.



Hiding

To become hidden, the shadow can't be observed by the war dog crucibite, so they must get out of the crucibite's line of effect. In this situation, the shadow could do this by moving to put a wall between them and the crucibite or moving up onto a roof.

Knockback

A creature wanting to push an adjacent creature away from them can attempt to shove that creature using the following ability.

Knockback



Maneuver
One creature

Power Roll + Might:

≤11 Push 1

12–16 Push 2

17+ Push 3

Effect: You can usually target only creatures of your size or smaller. If your Might score is 2 or higher, you can target any creature with a size equal to or less than your Might score.



Make or Assist a Test

Many tests are maneuvers if made in combat. Searching a chest with a Reason test, picking a door's lock with an Agility test, or lifting a portcullis with a Might test would all be maneuvers. Assisting a test is also a maneuver in combat (see [Assist a Test](#) in [Chapter 9: Tests](#)).

Complex or time-consuming tests might require a main action if made in combat—or could take so long that they can't be made during combat at all. Other tests that take no time at all, such as a Reason test to recall lore about mummies, are usually free maneuvers in combat. The Director has the final say regarding which tests can be made as maneuvers.

Search for Hidden Creatures

The Search for Hidden Creatures maneuver allows a creature to attempt to locate creatures hidden from them (see [Hide and Sneak](#) in [Chapter 9: Tests](#)).

Stand Up

A creature can use the Stand Up maneuver to stand up if they are prone, ending that condition. Alternatively, they can use this maneuver to make a willing adjacent prone creature stand up.

Use Consumable

Unless otherwise noted in its description, a creature can activate a consumable treasure such as a potion with the Use Consumable maneuver. A creature can use this maneuver to administer a consumable treasure that benefits the user either to themselves or to a willing adjacent creature. See [Consumables](#) in [Chapter 13: Rewards](#).

Main Actions

When you take a main action, you most often do so to use a unique ability granted by your class, kit, or a treasure (see [Abilities](#) in [Chapter 5: Classes](#)). These abilities represent the most unique, flavorful, and impactful things you can do with your main action.

You can also use your main action to help another creature regain Stamina, charge into battle, defend yourself, or make a free strike.

You can convert your main action into a maneuver or a move action, allowing you to take two maneuvers or move actions on your turn.

Charge

When a creature takes the Charge main action, they move up to their speed in a straight line without jumping, then make a melee free strike (see [Free Strikes](#) below) against a target when they end their move. If the creature has an ability with the Charge keyword, they can use that ability against the target instead of a free strike.

A creature can't move through difficult terrain or shift when they charge. They can fly or burrow as part of the Charge main action if they have that movement available to them, but they can't climb or swim while charging unless they can automatically use that movement at full speed.

Defend

When a creature takes the Defend main action, ability rolls made against them have a double bane until the start of their next turn. Additionally, you have a double edge on tests when called for to resist environmental effects or a creature's traits or abilities. A creature gains no benefit from this action while another creature is taunted by them (see [Conditions](#) in [Chapter 5: Classes](#)).

Free Strike

A creature can use this main action to make a free strike (see [Free Strikes](#) below). Most of the time, you'll want to use the more impactful main actions granted by your class, kit, or other feature, just as the Director will use the main actions in a creature's stat block, but free strikes are available for when all else fails. For instance, a fury who has no other options for ranged strikes might use the Ranged Weapon Free Strike ability with an improvised weapon when battling a flying foe.

Heal

A creature who uses the Heal main action employs medicine or inspiring words to make an adjacent creature feel better and stay in the fight. The target creature can spend a Recovery to regain Stamina, or can make a saving throw against one effect they are suffering that is ended by a saving throw.

Free Strikes

Every creature can use a free strike ability as a main action on their turn, though doing so typically isn't the most effective choice. Most of the time, you'll use free strikes when the rules call for it. Specific rules let you use free strikes as part of an action that allows you to also do something else impactful, such as how the Charge main action lets you move and use a melee free strike in one main action (see [Charge](#) above).

Many rules and abilities allow heroes to make free strikes when it isn't their turn, such as the tactician's Overwatch ability. As well, all characters can make an opportunity attack free strike.

Granted Abilities

Some abilities, such as the tactician's Strike Now or I'll Open and You'll Close abilities, allow another creature to use a signature ability or heroic ability when it isn't their turn. Unless otherwise stated, a creature can always use a free strike instead of a granted signature ability or heroic ability.

Opportunity Attacks

Whenever a creature has an enemy adjacent to them and the enemy willingly moves to a space that isn't adjacent to the creature without shifting, the creature can take advantage of that movement to quickly make a melee free strike against the enemy as a free triggered action. This is called an opportunity attack.

If a creature has a bane or double bane on the power roll against the enemy, they can't make an opportunity attack.

Standard Free Strikes

Every hero has two standard free strike abilities available to them. Your class might give you additional free strike options, and your kit can improve the standard options (see [Chapter 6: Kits](#)).

A melee weapon free strike is a melee strike made with an unarmed strike or an improvised weapon. A ranged weapon free strike is a ranged strike made with an improvised weapon. At the Director's discretion, the damage type of an improvised weapon can change based on the object used. For example, if you use a burning torch as an improvised weapon, it could deal fire damage when used for a free strike.

Melee Weapon Free Strike

Charge, Melee, Strike, Weapon
Melee 1

Main action
One creature or object

Power Roll + Might or Agility:

- ≤11 2 + M or A damage
- 12-16 5 + M or A damage
- 17+ 7 + M or A damage

Ranged Weapon Free Strike

Ranged, Strike, Weapon
Ranged 5

Main action
One creature or object

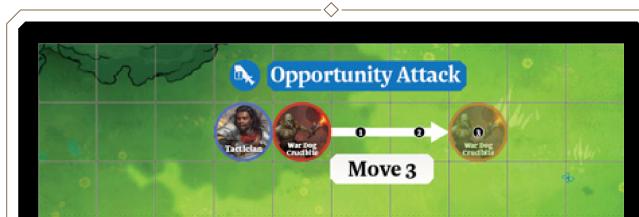
Power Roll + Might or Agility:

- ≤11 2 + M or A damage
- 12-16 4 + M or A damage
- 17+ 6 + M or A damage



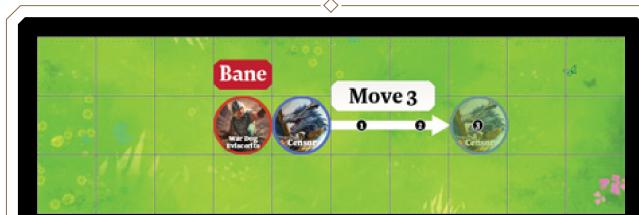
Opportunity Attacks

The tactician can't make any opportunity attacks against these adjacent war dogs as they move. Despite moving, the commando never stops being adjacent to the tactician, and the crucibite shifts away instead of moving.



Opportunity Attacks: Moving Out

A war dog crucibite moves out of a space that is adjacent to the tactician and into a space that isn't adjacent. The tactician can make an opportunity attack against the crucibite.



Opportunity Attacks: Moving With Banes

The war dog eviservite has a bane on strikes against the adjacent censor, so the censor can freely move away from the eviservite without worrying about the war dog making an opportunity attack.

Flanking

When you and one or more allies are adjacent to the same enemy and on opposite sides of the enemy, you are flanking that enemy. While flanking an enemy, you gain an edge on melee strikes against them.

If you're unsure whether your hero and an ally are flanking a foe, imagine a line extending from the center of your space to the center of your ally's space. If that line passes through opposite sides or corners of the enemy's space, then you and your ally are flanking the enemy.

You must have line of effect to the enemy and be able to take triggered actions to gain or grant the flanking benefit.



Flanking

The censor flanks the war dog commando with the fury, since they are on directly opposite sides of their enemy. The troubadour isn't flanking the creature with the censor though, since they aren't on directly opposite sides. The shadow can't flank the crucibite with the conduit because the conduit is dazed, which prevents them from taking triggered actions.



Flanking

The tactician flanks the war dog amalgamate with the elementalist and talent, since they are on directly opposite sides of their enemy. No heroes flank the other amalgamate. The censor, using an ability with a distance of melee 2, isn't adjacent to the amalgamate and so can't flank with the shadow. The fury and null aren't on directly opposite sides of the amalgamate, and so they aren't flanking their enemy either.

Cover

When you have line of effect to a creature or object but that target has at least half their form blocked by a solid object such as a tree, wall, or overturned table, the target has cover. You take a bane on damage-dealing abilities used against creatures or objects that have cover from you.



Cover

The war dog commando has cover against a strike from the tactician, since a low wall between them covers half of the commando's body. The tactician can't attack the crucibite, since much higher walls completely block the crucibite's body, and therefore the tactician does not have line of effect to the crucibite.

Concealment

Darkness, fog, invisibility magic, and any other effect that fully obscures a creature or object but doesn't protect their physical form grants that creature or object concealment. Even if you have line of effect to such a target, a creature or object has concealment from you if you can't see or otherwise observe them. You can target a creature or object with concealment using a strike, provided they aren't hidden (see [Hide and Sneak](#) in [Chapter 9: Tests](#)). However, strikes against such targets take a bane.



Concealment

The tactician is shrouded in fog, which provides them with concealment against a strike from the war dog crucibite. The crucibite's strike takes a bane as a result.

Invisible Creatures

Invisible creatures always have concealment from other creatures. If an invisible creature isn't hidden, they can still be targeted by abilities. The test made to find a hidden creature who is invisible takes a bane.

Damage

Strikes, area attacks, environmental effects, and other hazards can all deal damage to the heroes and their foes. Whenever a creature takes damage, they reduce their Stamina (see below) by an amount equal to the damage taken.

Damage Types

Typical damage, such as that caused by weapons, falling, traps, and monstrous claws, has no type associated with it. That's because for most creatures, there's no difference in the amount of harm caused by being run through with a pike, dropped from a height onto a stone floor, slashed by a pendulum scythe, or skewered on a minotaur's horns.

However, when it comes to elemental and supernatural damage sources, some creatures might have an immunity or weakness to that damage. As such, abilities and effects note when they deal any of the following damage types: acid, cold, corruption, fire, holy, lightning, poison, psychic, or sonic.

DAMAGE IMMUNITY

Damage immunity means that a creature can ignore some or all of the damage they would usually take from certain attacks or effects.

Damage immunity might have a damage type associated with it, expressed as "[damage type] immunity." Damage immunity often has a value associated with it, so that one creature's stat block notes "damage immunity 5" (representing immunity to all damage), while another creature has "lightning immunity 5." Whenever a target with damage immunity takes damage of the indicated type, they can reduce the damage by the value of the immunity (to a minimum of 0 damage). If the value of the immunity is "all," then the target ignores all damage of the indicated type.

Damage immunity should be the last thing applied when calculating damage. For instance, if your hero has fire immunity 5 and takes 8 fire damage, they take 3 damage. But if an ally first halved the damage with a triggered action, your hero would take 4 damage before immunity is applied, with immunity then reducing the damage to 0.

If multiple damage immunities apply to a source of damage, only the immunity with the highest value applies. For instance, a creature with damage immunity 5 and fire immunity 10 who takes 12 fire damage reduces the damage by 10 points.

DAMAGE WEAKNESS

Damage weakness works like damage immunity, except that creatures take extra damage whenever they take damage of the indicated type. For instance, if a creature has fire weakness 5 and is dealt 10 fire damage, they take 15 fire damage instead.

A creature who has "damage weakness X" with no specific type or keyword indicated has weakness of the indicated amount when they take damage of any type.

If a creature has both damage immunity and damage weakness for a source of damage, apply the weakness first, then the immunity.

If multiple damage weaknesses apply to a source of damage, only the weakness with the highest value applies.



Stamina

Your hero's survivability is represented by your Stamina. Think of Stamina as a combination of a creature's physical vitality and their overall energy for dodging and resisting incoming blows, spells, and other violence. It's not that every instance of damage deals a bleeding wound to you, but that each one chips away at your ability to fight effectively. One attack might make you sweat as you leap back to avoid an arrow, while another might graze your elbow with a dagger nick, leaving a dull, distracting pain. Eventually, this draining of energy leaves you open for bigger blows that can truly harm your body—or possibly kill you.

After any damage you take is reduced by damage immunity or other effects, your Stamina is reduced by an amount equal to the remaining damage. Some effects can also reduce your Stamina maximum, limiting the amount of Stamina you can regain.

Recoveries and Recovery Value

Each hero has a number of Recoveries determined by their class. A hero also has a recovery value that equals one-third of their Stamina maximum, rounded down. When you use the Catch Breath maneuver in combat (see [Maneuvers](#) above), you spend a Recovery and regain Stamina equal to your recovery value. Outside of combat, you can spend as many Recoveries as you have remaining. Some abilities, items, and other effects allow you to spend a Recovery to regain Stamina equal to your recovery value plus a little extra (as described by the effect), or to regain Stamina without spending a Recovery.

Winded

Your winded value equals half your Stamina maximum. When your Stamina is equal to or less than your winded value, you are winded. Although being winded has no effects on its own, certain ancestry, class, item, title, and monster abilities affect winded creatures.

You can tell when other creatures are winded and vice versa.

Dying and Death

When your Stamina is 0 or lower, you are dying. While dying, you can't use the Catch Breath maneuver in combat. Additionally, you are bleeding, and this instance of the condition can't be negated or removed in any way until you are no longer dying. While you are dying, you can still act; your allies can help you spend Recoveries in combat, and you can spend Recoveries out of combat as usual.

While your Stamina is lower than 0, if it reaches the negative of your winded value, you die. When you die, you can't be brought back to life without the use of a special powerful item, such as a Scroll of Resurrection.

Director-Controlled Creatures

In most circumstances, Director-controlled creatures die or are destroyed when their Stamina drops to 0.

No Recoveries

Director-controlled creatures don't have Recoveries or a recovery value. Any such creatures who regain Stamina during a battle do so by way of a special item or an ability in their stat block. However, there are times when a hero might wish to use an ability that allows another creature to spend a Recovery or to regain Stamina equal to their recovery value on an injured NPC. In such cases, a Director-controlled creature regains Stamina equal to one-third of their Stamina maximum.

Knocking Creatures Out

If you damage a creature with an ability that would kill them, you can choose to instead knock them unconscious. If a creature takes damage while unconscious in this way, they die.

Director-controlled creatures remain unconscious for 1 hour if no one does anything to wake them. They then gain 1 Stamina and are no longer unconscious.

Heroes remain unconscious for 1 hour if no one does anything to wake them. After 1 hour, they can spend a Recovery and are no longer unconscious. If the hero has no Recoveries left, they can't wake up until they finish a respite.

UNCONSCIOUS

While you are unconscious, you can't take main actions, maneuvers, triggered actions, free triggered actions, or free maneuvers; your speed is 0; you are unaware of your surroundings; and you are prone. Ability rolls against you have a double edge. If you wake up from being unconscious, you can stand up from prone as a free maneuver.

Temporary Stamina

Some abilities, treasures, and other effects grant a creature temporary Stamina. Temporary Stamina shouldn't be included in a creature's Stamina total when figuring out a creature's recovery value or winded value. If you have temporary Stamina while winded, dying, or dead, the temporary Stamina doesn't change those states.

Whenever you take damage while you have temporary Stamina, the temporary Stamina decreases first, and any leftover damage is applied to your Stamina as usual. For instance, if you have 10 temporary Stamina and take 16 damage, you lose the temporary Stamina and then lose another 6 Stamina.

There is no maximum to how much temporary Stamina you can have. Regaining Stamina can't restore temporary Stamina. If you have temporary Stamina and then gain more temporary Stamina, you get whichever amount of temporary Stamina is greater, rather than adding the two pools together. For instance, if an ability grants you 10 temporary Stamina when you already have 5, you have 10 temporary Stamina, not 15.

Unless otherwise indicated, temporary Stamina disappears at the end of an encounter.

Object Stamina

Mundane objects in the game have Stamina based on the material they're made of. When an object's Stamina is reduced to 0, the object is destroyed. Objects have poison immunity all and psychic immunity all, though the Director can remove one or both of these immunities in the case of living objects, such as plants. A size 1 object or 1 square of a larger object made of common materials has Stamina as follows:

- **Glass:** 1 Stamina
- **Wood:** 3 Stamina
- **Stone:** 6 Stamina
- **Metal:** 9 Stamina

The Director can decide that a well-made or poorly made object has more or less Stamina. Destroying a supernatural object often (but not always) requires a specific quest, such as throwing a magic ring back into the volcano where it was forged.

Underwater Combat

If a creature is fully submerged in water, they have fire immunity 5 and lightning weakness 5. If they can't automatically swim at full speed while moving, their power rolls take a bane.

Suffocating

During combat or under similarly stressful circumstances, you can hold your breath for a number of combat rounds equal to your Might score (minimum 1 round). At the end of each combat round after that, you take 1d6 damage while holding your breath.

Out of combat, you can hold your breath for a number of minutes equal to your Might score. Being unable to breathe after that time counts as a stressful condition, causing you to run out of air as above.

Mounted Combat

A willing creature with the Mount role (see [Creature Roles](#) in *Draw Steel: Monsters*) can serve as your mount as long as their size is greater than yours. You can climb onto your mount freely (see [Climbing Other Creatures](#) above). You determine which space you occupy. While mounted, you can take the Ride move action, but a mount can only be ridden this way once per round. Both mount and rider each take a turn during combat.

If a creature riding a mount is force moved, they are knocked off the mount and must make a test to determine how they land (see [Climbing Other Creatures](#)). If a mount is force moved, they carry any riders with them. Riders and mounts teleport separately.

If your mount dies, they fall prone, and you fall off them and land prone in the nearest unoccupied space of your choice.

End of Combat

At the end of combat, the Director determines if the heroes earn any Victories. Any effect or condition on you that you suffered during combat (except for being winded, unconscious, or dying) ends if you want it to.

How Combat Ends

The Director determines when a combat encounter is over. While some battles—especially showdowns with important villains—can be about a fight to the bitter end, many other encounters can become a tedious slog if the heroes need to fight until every last enemy's Stamina is reduced to 0.

To avoid a battle dragging, the Director can set objectives when they build the encounter. Once the heroes achieve those objectives, or if it becomes clear that they can win the fight with minimal effort, the Director can end the encounter. They might do so by calling “Cut!” like a film director, or they can use some other phrase or indicator.

When the Director ends combat this way, the players typically choose how the battle ends by narrating a dramatic finish. Or in rarer cases when the heroes achieve a major objective that sets off a story-defining event, the Director narrates the end of the battle with a positive outcome for the players, called an event ending (see below).

Objective Endings

While planning a combat encounter, the Director can set one or more objectives the heroes can achieve to end the encounter without dropping every last foe. Some broad categories of objectives are described in this section, but the Director should feel free to create their own. As well, Directors can always end combat anytime it becomes clear that the heroes are going to win an encounter with minimal effort, even if they haven't achieved all the objectives.

Each of the objective endings in this section is explored in detail—including looking at monster roles, map advice, success conditions, and more—in the [Introduction](#) section of *Draw Steel: Monsters*.

DIMINISH NUMBERS

The simplest combat encounter objective is almost always “defeat them before they defeat us.” Though the heroes don't have to kill every last enemy in this type of encounter, winning the day requires that they push their opponents to the point where they are broken, flee, or surrender.



DEFEAT A SPECIFIC FOE

An encounter built around defeating a specific foe includes one or more of the heroes' enemies commanding the rest, such as a hobgoblin bloodlord leading a group of mercenaries, or one or more particularly powerful foes among a group of weaker ones, such as a pair of tusker demons in a gnoll war band. Because these more-powerful enemies are the stars of the encounter, if only weak foes are left once the stars are gone, the battle loses its challenge and it's time to wrap it up. It makes sense for those weaker foes to flee or surrender once their strongest allies have gone down.

GET THE THING!

Classic heroic fantasy is full of important objects that the heroes must protect from the forces of evil: magic rings, royal birth certificates, dragon eggs, and the like. Heroes often find themselves at violent odds with their enemies as they race to collect a valuable or important item from a guarded temple or castle, or when they need to steal the item from a group of enemies already in possession of it.

Objectives in this category work well when paired with other objectives, such as defeating a specific foe. For instance, the heroes must steal a ledger containing a record of criminal activity from an overmind and her lackeys. However, even if they obtain the ledger, the battle won't be over until they also defeat the overmind, who won't let the book go without a fight!

DESTROY THE THING!

Combat doesn't always have to be about destroying your enemies. Sometimes it's about destroying their stuff! Burning a pirate captain's vessel, closing a portal to the Abyssal Wasteland before it lets in an army of demons, or shutting down a massive kobold trap made of spinning blades could so hamper the heroes' foes that the battle is no longer worth fighting once the damage is done.

SAVE ANOTHER

No one earns the mantle of hero without saving a few lives. Sometimes the point of an encounter isn't to kill, but to save as many folks as you can. If the heroes rescue powerful allies from the clutches of their foes during combat, the added strength of those allies might be enough to make the remainder of the encounter trivial. When you and your companions save a griffon from a crew of poachers, the hunters become the ... well, you know the rest.

ESCORT

Surprising as it may seem, sometimes the fate of the mission doesn't rest on the heroes' shoulders at all! Sometimes it rests on the shoulders of someone standing next to the heroes. The heroes' job is to keep this important person safe as they travel to a specific destination.

Not every escort encounter is on behalf of a wise or mighty ally. Sometimes the heroes are tasked with protecting a helpless or even an actively troublesome creature, such as a hapless noble or a wayward child. They might even have to protect a bulky or inconvenient inanimate object. Whatever the case, the enemies just keep coming until the heroes get their charge to their destination.

HOLD THEM OFF

Sometimes the heroes just need to buy time. They might need to battle a conquering tyrant's army to allow innocent villagers time to escape. They might need to hold off wave after wave of zombies while a group of priests completes a ritual to lay the undead to rest for good. To achieve this objective, the heroes need to stay alive and protect a particular position for a number of rounds determined by you.

ASSAULT THE DEFENSES

The enemy holds a strategically important position and the heroes want it. The encounter ends when the heroes secure the objective defensive location for themselves, even if there are more enemies outside it. Sometimes an encounter with this objective is part of a combined objective, as when heroes must first assault the defenses, then hold that defensive position against counterattack.

STOP THE ACTION

Sometimes combat is complicated by the fact that the heroes need to stop the villainous actions of their foes. It's not enough to simply defeat the warriors in a cult. The heroes must also stop the zealots' archdevil-summoning ritual! Or it might be that the heroes need to interrupt a wedding and make sure an evil mage doesn't marry the heir to the throne. Despite combat, the mage forces the ceremony to continue! Objectives in this category have a timer associated with them. If the heroes don't achieve the objective in a certain number of rounds, the conditions of the battle could well change. For instance, if the cultists summon the archdevil, defeating the devil suddenly becomes the heroes' new objective!

COMPLETE THE ACTION

This encounter objective sees the characters charged with initiating an event, performing a ritual, and so forth. For instance, if the heroes are attempting to launch an airship while repelling a time raider boarding party, the encounter could be over the moment the heroes manage to activate the vessel and take off with just a few time raiders actually aboard.

Dramatic Finish

If the heroes are able to end a fight with a dramatic finish, the Director assigns each hero one or more of their remaining enemies, then asks that hero's player to describe how the hero neutralizes that threat. The hero might deliver a killing blow, knock their foe out, or let the enemy flee with their tail between their legs (literally or figuratively). If the fight has more heroes than Director-controlled enemies, the Director can assign more than one hero to an enemy, then ask the players how their characters work together to bring that enemy down. After everyone gives a description, the battle ends.

Event Ending

If the Director calls the end of combat when a specific objective in an encounter is achieved, the event ending creates a big narrative finish. The Director can pick a narrative trigger for an event ending before an encounter begins, or can come up with one on the fly if that makes more sense.

Event endings can cover big scenarios such as the characters destroying a dam to unleash a river upon their enemies, or completing a ritual that causes all the demons they've been battling to be sent back to the Abyssal Wasteland, accompanied by visual details. For example, if the heroes are battling a necromancer who controls a horde of zombies, the undead might all crumble to dust when the necromancer is defeated. If the heroes destroy an eldritch machine sapping the land of its natural energy, the shockwave from the device's destruction could vaporize the cultists attempting to protect it.

Fleeing Foes

If you've played a fantasy RPG before, odds are you've had an encounter where you didn't chase down every last fleeing foe—and then one such foe grabbed another bunch of evil buddies and came back to ambush you. It takes only one experience like this to create players who promise, "No survivors. No mercy!" whenever foes break ranks. Chasing down every last foe can be fun once in a while, but it can easily turn a tactical encounter into a slog.

Luckily, this is a heroic game. Although the Director can surprise the players with dramatic reveals and twisty-turny stories, "Gotcha!" moments that make players suspicious of every fleeing bandit shouldn't be part of those stories. If a bandit is fleeing an encounter, they're running away to rethink their life. If they're going for help, the players should get some sense of that—for example, the bandit screaming at the top of their lungs for help as they run toward their leader's tent. That way, the players can process what's happening, and will understand that stopping that fleeing bandit is part of the challenge of the encounter.