



VORPAL INITIATIVE

Well, that's that. Negotiations are over, your party's rogue has brandished their blade in response to an insult and the proverbial gauntlet has hit the sand. You excitedly shake your lucky d20 in your palm, hoping to roll big and put a decisive end to this fight... and roll a 1. You're acting last, yet again.

Does this situation sound all too familiar? Or what about that time the Fighter used their Action Surge feature, cleaved through multiple hapless victims—only to block the doorway with a pile of corpses and leave you with only a target just outside of your range to even fight?

Vorpal Initiative seeks to mitigate the losses incurred from a low initiative roll, and give a semblance of fairness back for combatants who have less actions to take than others on any given round of an encounter. Low on the initiative track? Take a moment to recover and set yourself up for an early action next round. Unable to lob that blast of fire because your oversized travel partner blocked your view? Not ideal, but let's just say you're saving yourself for the next round, shall we?

Through the addition of Stamina, a combat-specific resource determined by your first Initiative roll, you have more fine control over your position in the order of combat. Actions cost Stamina, and after each combatant has had a turn and a new round begins, your remaining Stamina becomes your new Initiative, benefiting those who do less in their turn to act sooner on the next round.

Low on Stamina? No problem! Take the Recover action to regain lost Stamina: giving you back into the fight and potentially putting you back on top.

While these two changes alone will make combat more fluid and dynamic, why stop there? We're providing a number of Variant Class Features, Spells, Feats, Magic Items, and Optional and Variant Rules to interact with Stamina giving you even more control over the flow of the fight.

VORPAL INITIATIVE COMBAT STEP BY STEP

1. **Determine Surprise:** The DM determines whether anyone involved in the combat encounter is surprised.
2. **Establish positions:** The DM decides where all the Characters and Monsters are located. Given the adventurers' Marching Order or their stated positions in the room or other Location, the DM figures out where the adversaries are—how far away and in what direction.
3. **Roll Initiative:** Everyone involved in the combat encounter rolls Initiative, determining the order of combatants' turns.
4. **Roll Stamina:** Everyone involved in the combat encounter rolls Stamina, determining the Stamina they have available at the start of combat.
5. **Take turns:** Each participant in the battle takes a turn in Initiative order, reducing their current Stamina based on the actions they take.
6. **Begin the next round:** When everyone involved in the combat has had a turn, the round ends. Each participant's Initiative becomes their current Stamina, potentially changing the order of combatant's turns. Repeat **Step 5** until the fighting stops.

SURPRISE

At the start of a combat encounter, surprise is determined by the GM as normal. Creatures who are surprised on their turn are only able to use their action to regain their composure, which reduces their Stamina by 4 and ends the effects of being surprised.

INITIATIVE

When rolling to determine Initiative order, players can choose to make a Dexterity or Intelligence check.



STAMINA

Stamina represents a character's remaining endurance, the fuel left in the tank so to speak. The things you do during combat take effort and an exertion of yourself—reflected by a cost to your pool of Stamina. A well maintained pool of Stamina is key to having a favorable position in the turn order during combat and keeping as many action options open to you as possible. When you run out of gas, you have no option left but to stop and fuel up.

ROLLING FOR STAMINA

When combat starts, every participant makes a Strength or Constitution check to determine their starting Stamina. The DM makes one roll for an entire group of identical creatures, who share a pool of Stamina (see "Groups of Creatures").

A creature has a maximum Stamina of 30. When determining starting Stamina, if the result would leave the creature with a Stamina greater than 30, the amount in excess of 30 is gained as temporary Stamina.

USING STAMINA

On your turn, you can move a distance up to your speed and take one action as normal, assuming you have enough Stamina to do so.

- Taking an action typically reduces your Stamina by 4. Some features might reduce your Stamina by more or less when you take the action associated with that feature.
- Any bonus action or reaction you take reduces your Stamina by 2.
- Moving more than 4 feet on your turn, or standing up from being prone, reduces your Stamina by 2.
- At the end of each turn while you are exhausted, you reduce your Stamina by an amount equal to your level of exhaustion.

You can't take an action that would reduce your Stamina to below 0.



GROUPS OF CREATURES

The DM makes one initiative roll for an entire group of identical creatures, so each member of the group acts at the same time. As a result, the group has a shared pool of Stamina. When the group of creatures take their actions, any one action taken by a member of the group that would reduce Stamina reduces the Stamina of the entire group, but only once per type of action. For example, if only one Goblin in a group of eight uses their bonus action, their Stamina is reduced by 2. However, if seven of those eight Goblins uses their action to Attack, their Stamina is only reduced by 4.

When a group of creatures runs out of Stamina and are unable to perform actions, they must take the Recover action as a group.

This helps to reduce the burden of tracking on the DM. If a group is particularly large, such as the aforementioned party of eight goblins, the DM can instead choose to section them into smaller groups with their own initiatives based on something like their position on the map or their chosen type of attack (such as those near the players using their scimitars versus those behind the table using their short bows). If the DM chooses to split groups like this, they should remain consistent even if the factors used to split the groups change.

LEGENDARY CREATURES

A legendary creature has access to a number of special types of actions called legendary actions, which are taken on other creature's turns. Taking a potential three additional full actions is an important part of a legendary creature's threat to the party, but could quickly burn through that creature's Stamina if it were spending 4 Stamina for each of these actions.

Instead, a legendary creature can take its first legendary action without spending any Stamina. The next requires the creature to reduce their Stamina by 2, and any further legendary actions require the creature to reduce their Stamina by 4. A legendary action that costs more than 1 action (indicated in parentheses after the action's name) counts as taking that many legendary actions for determining how much Stamina is required.

In addition, any legendary creature can take the Recover action as a legendary action.



PLAYER CONTROLLED CREATURES

A number of character abilities such as class features and spells can introduce additional creatures to combat, often in the form of combat pets or mounts. How controlling one of these creatures interacts with Stamina depends on whether the creature must share your initiative, or rolls its own.

Own Initiative. Player controlled creatures that roll and use their own initiative will have their own Stamina to track. These creatures roll to determine their starting Stamina immediately after rolling their initiative. Examples of this are the Conjure line of spells (such as *conjure animals*) or animal companions and mounts. All of the rules relating to Stamina apply to these creatures as normal.

Shared Initiative. Some player controlled creatures do not roll their own initiative, but instead share their initiative with their controller. Examples of this are the Beast Master's Ranger's Companion (or Primal Companion), the Artificer's Steel Defender, or the Summon line of spells (such as *summon beast* ^{TCE}). A creature that shares its initiative with its controller does not have its own Stamina. When its controller player commands it to act, the player must spend Stamina for the action. If the controlled creature can act on its own, such as taking a reaction or using the Dodge action when no other command is issued, it does so without any Stamina cost.

A Note on Mounts. While mounts always roll their own initiative, even when summoned with the find steed type spells, a rider can choose to control the mount. The rules for this can be found in the *Player's Handbook* Chapter 9 under Mounted Combat. Summarily, while choosing to control the mount, it acts on the player's turn but has more limited actions. The mount still retains its place in the initiative order, but is skipped and instead acts on the controlling player's turn. It must still reduce its Stamina to take actions and move long distances; or take the Recover action to regain its Stamina.

REGAINING STAMINA

When you are low on Stamina, you become more limited in what actions you can take on your turn. One action you can always take on your turn is the special Recover action, which does not reduce your Stamina but instead recovers it.

Recover. You take a moment to breathe, regaining your strength and composure. Make a Strength or Constitution check, adding the total to your Stamina. If this would result in you exceeding 30 Stamina, the amount in excess of 30 is gained as temporary Stamina.

TEMPORARY STAMINA

Some features and abilities can grant temporary Stamina. This boon allows you momentary bursts of endurance.

When you have temporary Stamina and take an action, the temporary Stamina is reduced first, and any leftover cost carries over to your normal Stamina. For example, if you have 3 temporary Stamina and take the Attack action, you lose the temporary Stamina and then reduce your current Stamina by 1.

Temporary Stamina only lasts until the end of your next turn in combat.

DROPPING TO 0 HIT POINTS

A creature that is reduced to 0 hit points has their Stamina reduced to 0 immediately. The creature's current position in the initiative order remains the same until the next round of combat begins.





PLAYER OPTIONS

In this section, we provide new and enhanced class features to interact with Stamina, further refining the tenacity of each class.

BARBARIAN

The Barbarian class receives new features in this section.



UNTIRING

1st-Level Barbarian Feature

At the start of each of your turns when raging and not incapacitated, you gain temporary Stamina equal to your Constitution modifier.

BARD

The Bard class receives new features in this section.



SONG OF RECOVERY

2nd-Level Bard Feature

As an action, which you take during combat, you can use invigorating oration or music to help revitalize your fatigued allies. The Stamina of you and any friendly creatures who can hear you is increased by 1d6.

The amount of recovered Stamina increases when you reach certain levels in this class: to 1d8 at 9th level, to 1d10 at 13th level, and to 1d12 at 17th level.

Once you use this feature, you can't use it or your Song of Rest feature until you've completed a short or long rest.

CLERIC

The Cleric class receives new features in this section.



BOLSTER HOPE

2nd-Level Cleric Feature

You gain the following Channel Divinity option:

CHANNEL DIVINITY: BOLSTER HOPE

As an action, you present your holy symbol and speak a prayer. The Stamina of each creature of your choice within 30 feet increases by an amount equal to your cleric level.

DIVINE PROWESS

4th-Level Cleric Feature

Whenever you cast a cantrip, or cast a spell which restores hit points to another creature, you gain temporary Stamina equal to your proficiency bonus.

DRUID

The Druid class receives new features in this section.



BEASTIAL VIGOR

2nd-Level Druid Feature

Whenever you use your Wild Shape feature, your Stamina increases by an amount equal to your druid level.

FIGHTER

The Fighter class receives new features in this section.



FIGHTING STYLE OPTIONS

1st-Level Fighter Feature

When choosing a fighting style, the following choices are added to your list of options:

SWIFT DEFENDER

As a reaction to taking damage, you can reduce your Stamina by an amount of your choice to reduce the damage taken by an equal amount.

WARRIOR'S BREATH

1st-Level Fighter Feature

When you use your Second Wind feature, you gain Stamina equal to the amount of hit points regained.

WARLORD'S COMMAND

2nd-Level Fighter Feature

When you take the Attack action, you can replace an attack with a special bolstering command given to an ally who can see and hear you within 120 feet. That creature regains Stamina equal to your 1d4 + half your fighter level.



MONK

The Monk class receives new features in this section.



KI OPTIONS

2nd-Level Monk Feature

You gain the following option for your Ki feature:

MOMENT OF REFLECTION

As a bonus action, spend 2 ki points and use the Recovery action. Add your Monk level to the result.

PATIENT MOVEMENTS

2nd-Level Monk Feature

At the end of your turn, if you have not used more movement than the amount granted to you by Unarmored Movement, you gain 2 temporary Stamina.

PALADIN

The Paladin class receives new features in this section.



CRUSADER'S BLESSING

1st-Level Paladin Feature

Whenever you use your Lay on Hands feature to restore a creature's hit points, your target's Stamina increases by an equal amount, up to a maximum of your Paladin level.

DIVINE PREMONITION

1st-Level Paladin Feature

When you detect the presence of an Undead, Fiend, or Celestial with your Divine Sense, you know if you've seen that creature before. If you are hostile to that creature or if you haven't seen it before, you gain a +10 bonus to Initiative checks you make for the next minute.

FIGHTING STYLE OPTIONS

2nd-Level Paladin Feature

When choosing a fighting style, the following choices are added to your list of options:

PROTECTOR'S DUTY

Whenever you take the Dodge action, if a creature within 5 feet of you is targeted by an attack, you can use your reaction and reduce your Stamina by an additional 3 to cause the attack to target you instead.

COMMANDER'S AURA

6th-Level Paladin Feature, Replacing Aura of Courage

If you are not incapacitated, you and friendly creatures within 10 feet of you increase your Stamina by an amount equal to your proficiency bonus at the start of your turn.

At 18th level, the range of this aura increases to 30 feet.

RANGER

The Ranger class receives new features in this section.



ENHANCED NATURAL EXPLORER

1st-Level Ranger Feature

Whenever you make an Initiative check while in your chosen terrain, add your Wisdom modifier and proficiency bonus to the roll.

ENHANCED FAVORED ENEMY

1st-Level Ranger Feature

Whenever you damage a creature that is a favored enemy using a weapon, you gain temporary Stamina equal to their CR or level (minimum your proficiency bonus).

FIGHTING STYLE OPTIONS

2nd-Level Ranger Feature

When choosing a fighting style, the following choices are added to your list of options:

SKIRMISHER

If you move at least half your movement, your next attack made before the end of your turn reduces the target's Stamina by an amount equal to the half damage dealt.

PRIMEVAL INTUITION

3rd-Level Ranger Feature

Whenever you detect a creature using your Primeval Awareness feature, until the feature ends, you have advantage on Initiative checks and can't be surprised.



ROGUE

The Rogue class receives new features in this section.



PHYSICAL CONDITIONING

1st-Level Rogue Feature

Choose one of the following actions: Dash, Disengage, or Hide. Using the chosen action as an Action reduces your Stamina by 2, and using it as a bonus action (such as with the Cunning Action feature you gain at 2nd level) does not reduce your Stamina at all.

At 6th level, choose one other action from the list to gain this benefit.

SORCERER

The Sorcerer class receives new features in this section.



FONT OF MAGIC OPTIONS

2nd-Level Sorcerer Feature

You have access to the following additional magical effects, created from the wellspring of magic within you.

BOLSTER ENDURANCE

At the start of each of your turns, you can spend a number of sorcery points up to your proficiency bonus to increase your Stamina by 5 for each point spent.

TRANSPERANCE

As an action on your turn, you can touch another creature and spend 1 sorcery point to recover their stamina at the cost of your own. The target's Stamina increases by 5 + your Charisma modifier.

NEW FEATS

New feats are presented here in alphabetical order for groups that use them.

QUICK AND NIMBLE

Prerequisite: Proficiency in Acrobatics

Your nimble dexterity enables you to quickly reach the optimal position at the start of a fight. You gain the following benefits:

- You add your proficiency bonus to initiative rolls.
- After rolling initiative, if you are not surprised or otherwise incapacitated, you can use your reaction to move up to your movement.

LARGE AND IN CHARGE

Prerequisite: Proficiency in Athletics

With your conditioned body, you are able to push yourself to extreme limits. You gain the following benefits:

- When you use the Recovery action, you add your proficiency bonus to the total Stamina gained.
- When a creature makes an ability check to resist or break free from your grapple, you can reduce your Stamina by 5 to give a -5 penalty to their roll.

FURIOUS STRIKES

Prerequisite: Strength and Dexterity 13 or Higher

You've learned to wield your weapon with such speed and fury, it takes everything for the opponent to just withstand them. You gain the following benefits:

- When you score a critical hit with a melee weapon, the target's Stamina is reduced by half, and your Stamina increases by the same amount.
- Before you make an attack with a melee weapon, you can choose to forgo all damage the attack would deal. If you do, any hit against the target becomes a critical hit.



MAGIC ITEMS

New magic items are presented here in alphabetical order for the DM to reward their players with.



AMULET OF LIGHTNING

ATTUNEMENT

Wondrous Item, Rare

This lightning bolt is crafted from fine mithral, and placed on a chain string designed to be worn around the neck. While attuned to the amulet, whenever the attuned creature rolls initiative, they add both their Intelligence and Dexterity modifiers to their roll.



ARMBANDS OF STAMINA

ATTUNEMENT

Wondrous Item, Very Rare

These golden armbands are emblazoned with the imagery of powerful stallions. When the attuned creature has 4 Stamina or fewer remaining, they can take the Recovery action as a bonus action.



CAMEL RING

ATTUNEMENT

Ring, Rare

This yellowed ring is a simple band with a camel carved into its face. The attuned creature has the endurance of these noble creatures. When you roll to determine starting Stamina, you gain additional Stamina equal to your character level.



ENFEEBLER

ATTUNEMENT

Weapon (Shortsword), Very Rare

Enfeebler is a unique shortsword forged by a dao in ages past. The hilt of the blade has a minor tingling sensation when held in the hand. When the attuned creature deals damage with it, the target loses 1 Stamina for each damage die rolled. The attuned creature then gains half that much Stamina.



FALCYAR'S COOKING GEAR

Wondrous Item, Rare

This cookset works exactly like cook's utensils, but whenever you add your proficiency bonus to a check when using them you double your proficiency bonus.

Whenever you complete a long rest, you and each ally you prepare food for at the end of this long rest feel well fed. At the start of the next combat, a well fed creature gains a bonus to their initiative and Stamina rolls equal to their Constitution modifier.



FERN TATTOO

ATTUNEMENT

Wondrous Item, Rare

Produced using a special greensteel needle, this magic tattoo provides a well of vigor to draw upon.

Whenever the attuned creature gains Stamina or temporary Stamina, they can double the amount gained.

After using this power five times, the tattoo ink becomes black, and the tattoo becomes permanent and non-magical.



FLOATING STONE (QUICKSILVER)

ATTUNEMENT

Wondrous Item, Very Rare

Many types of floating stones exist, each type a distinct combination of shape and color.

When you use an action to toss one of these stones into the air, the stone orbits your head at a distance of 1d3 feet and confers a benefit to you. Thereafter, another creature must use an action to grasp or net the stone to separate it from you, either by making a successful unarmed attack roll against it or a successful DC 24 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check. You can use an action to seize and stow the stone, ending its effect.

A stone has AC 24, 10 hit points, and resistance to all damage. It is considered to be an object that is being worn while it orbits your head.

Quicksilver Stone. This stone is a perfectly spherical silver orb, until it is thrown into the air, where it becomes an amorphous liquid. If grasped or separated from you, it becomes solid again.

While this stone orbits your head, at the start of any round in combat where you have less Stamina than your proficiency bonus, you gain 2 Stamina.



POTION OF STAMINA

Potion, Varies

This orange liquid fills a jar shaped like a zebra's head. Drinking this potion as an action grants the drinker regains Stamina based on the rarity of the potion. An uncommon potion restores 2d4 + 2 Stamina. A rare potion restores 4d4 + 4 Stamina. A very rare potion restores 8d4 + 8 Stamina.



SLOTH

Weapon (Any), Uncommon

This weapon appears to be a finely crafted weapon of its type, forged with expert skill. When used to make a weapon attack, the attacker gains a +2 bonus to attack and damage.

Curse. Once used to make an attack, this weapon binds itself to the attacker and is unable to be sheathed, dropped, disarmed, or removed in any way short of casting a spell like *remove curse*.

The cursed creature must spend 2 Stamina each time they make an attack with this weapon.