Select Your Monsters

THREE WAYS TO ENSURE A FAIR (AND FUN!) FIGHT

Part One: Know the D&D math

While there are multiple ways to figure out how to build a fair fight, we're going to teach you one way that relies heavily on math. So get out your calculator!

First off, every monster or creature has an experience point total known as "XP." Secondly, there are predetermined XP totals based on a player's experience level and the difficulty level you want to run the encounter at. Those are your two math foundations – the XP total of all the players (ie, the party) and the monster(s) XP total. The idea is to match the two numbers so they are nearly equal.

For example, the predetermined XP number for a 4th level player at an easy level is 125. If there are 5 players, you have a party XP total of 625.

If those players met a group of 3 dire wolves (each one is 200 XP for a total of 600 XP) then that should be a fair (and somewhat easy) encounter.

WHERE TO FIND MORE MATH NUMBERS ON BUILDING FAIR ENCOUNTERS? ... Check out https://dnd.wizards.com/products/tabletop/dm-basic-rules and click on "Building Combat Encounters" on the left side of the page. This is also a great site to find free D&D monster stat blocks!

YOUR TURN: Below, write down some different monster possibilities, making sure the monsters' XP total is equal or nearly equal to your player party total. If you're not sure on the player party total, reach out to your Club Heroes' Game Master. But do the math below!

(Your answer goes here)

Part Two: Learn about its abilities and consider how to use them

Becoming a really good Game or Dungeon Master means learning your monsters. And that's much more than just knowing how many hit points it has or how it can attack.

Check out the monster's skill … Many times, unlike player-characters, creatures have only one skill noted in their stat block, meaning this one skill is what they are best at. For example, a winter wolf, shown at right, is difficult to see in snowy conditions. Meaning, as a Game Master, you should allow the wolves to sneak up on what they're hunting – even if it's the players!

CHECK THESE OUT ON YOUR MONSTERS:

Is it immune to anything? … Immune means the creature would take no damage from a specific damage type. Most creatures are not immune to anything so don't be surprised if you don't see this information.

Resistant? … This means it would take half damage from something, like fire or cold.

Abilities … The winter wolf has advantage on rolls dealing with listening and smelling. See what abilities your monster has and think about how to use it during the encounter.

YOUR TURN: Write down some of the skills and abilities of your monsters below.

(Your answer goes here)

Part Three: The environment & your monsters

Most creatures – and even monsters – adapt to the environment they're in. The giant frog, for example, can breathe air and water, meaning it could be lurking in a shallow river stained brown by recent rain when an unsuspecting player comes near it. Figure out how the monsters or creatures you have previously identified will use their environments during an encounter.

Common ways to use the environment to a creature's advantage ...
1) See if the creature's speed includes something other than regular movement, like climbing, swimming or flying. Then consider how to use that in your encounter.
2) Most creatures, unless they are aggressive hunters, have a hiding place. Where is your creature's hiding place? In tall grass? In a dense stand of trees? On a jungle vine 15 feet above the ground?

What could alert the players that this creature is present? Sometimes, the scariest part of being a player is finding something you can't explain, like the remains from a fresh hunt carried out by an unknown creature. And how about seeing a large creature's tracks in some wet sand? Think about how your players will discover your creature or monster's presence without actually seeing it.

YOUR TURN: Write down how your monsters will use their environment in your upcoming encounter, noting especially how players might get a sense of the monster's presence without seeing it and then how the monster will use the land/water/sky around it to its advantage during an encounter.

(Your answer goes here)