



Player Project: Week 6

Improving your encounters

BEST PRACTICES & STRATEGIES



Part One: Find your GM combat rhythm

Successful GMing during an encounter includes a healthy dose of storytelling and accounting, meaning you've got your hands full! To make it easier, find a "rhythm" – a repeated pattern of actions. Here's one such rhythm:

- * Start each round with a description of the scene, including how the environment may be effecting the players, and how it's changing.
- * End each player turn by ensuring they've made full use of their turn, including movement and actions. Don't be afraid to help or remind them!
- * Review your creature/monster tactics and strategies. This should change as a battle or encounter ensues.

A GM checklist for your encounters ...

- * Consider pre-rolling your initiatives for each creature/enemy so you won't slow down play;
- * Have monster stat blocks handy – printed out or available on your digital device;
- * Ask your players if they have feats that may impact your encounter scenes, including the Alert feat that could impact who gets surprised.
- * Review creature spells so you're versed on them before your session begins.



Different creatures – including dragons – can create dramatic changes to the environment. Remind players constantly about how this impacts them.

YOUR TURN: Below, write down the GM checklist you would like to use for your encounters.

(Your answer goes here)



BEST PRACTICES FOR ENCOUNTERS



Part Two: What is often forgotten by GMs during encounters

Often Game Masters get so caught up in keeping track of creature hit points they forget these crucial items during encounters

Spellcasting concentration – Any magic-user who is concentrating on a spell must make a concentration check if they are hit during a round. This can happen multiple times in a single round to just one spellcaster!

Conditions impacting players or enemies – It's not uncommon for PCs and their enemies to be negatively or positively impacted by ongoing conditions. Keep these in mind and even ask the players if you've forgotten.

Spells impacting creatures – It's likely the players have cast spells that require saves at the end of enemy rounds. The spell "Slow" is one such example that requires checks each round.

Hidden! – Certain classes of players – including rogues and rangers – may be difficult, if not impossible, to find each round, which could impact who the enemies target on their turn.

Light? Shadows? – This is by far the hardest element to remember – can the enemy see the player and vice versa!



What light allows you to see – and what it hides! – is always one of the most challenging items for DMs to remember each round during an encounter.

YOUR TURN: Make yourself a list of items you need to consider each round during an encounter.

(Your answer goes here)



BEST PRACTICES FOR ENCOUNTERS



Part Three: Test your D&D combat scene knowledge

- 1) Is casting two leveled spells on one turn allowed if a player uses an action and their bonus action to cast these?
- 2) When a player or GM rolls a critical hit, they can roll their damage dice twice and their modifier twice. True or false?
- 3) If an enemy successfully surprises a player, they get a “free” round where they have one complete turn. True?
- 4) If a player without Darkvision has a torch in a dark hallway, they should be able to see a goblin that’s not hiding and 50 feet in front of them, right?
- 5) If two players flee from one enemy without disengaging, both players would possibly receive opportunity attacks, right?



- 6) If a player casts a spell that requires concentration, they have to maintain concentration on that spell for a required number of rounds. True or false?
- 7) If a player wants to actively look around or investigate something during a combat round, their Perception should require an action. True or false?

ANSWERS: Don't look at these until you answer all the above questions!

- 1) No. Players are not allowed – in most cases – to use two leveled spells in one turn.
- 2) False. Yes, they roll their damage dice twice but add their modifier only once.
- 3) Yes, in most cases. The likely exception is if a player has the Alert feat.
- 4) No – torches only illuminate 40 feet of space.
- 5) No. Enemies, just like players, must use a reaction to get an opportunity attack. Since only one reaction is allowed per turn, the enemy could only take one opportunity attack.
- 6) False. A caster can end concentration as soon as they wish.
- 7) True, in most cases. This could depend on how engaged the player is at that moment.