

ABSTRACT DUNGEONS

Dungeoneering by the Numbers

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At times, it may arise in an ACKS campaign that a dungeon needs to be cleared out off-screen; perhaps henchmen are sent to do it, perhaps it's simply a side detour that everyone wishes to be over quickly. Whatever the reason, what's necessary is a set of rules that can be used to quickly and abstractly clear out dungeons. And that's what we provide in the article!

THE BASICS

The Abstract Dungeon rules assume that an organized group of **adventurers** goes on an **expedition** to clear out a **dungeon**. The expedition may consist of a single **foray** into the dungeon or multiple forays. Any number of adventurers may go on an expedition, but a maximum of six may go on any single foray into the dungeon.

The **party** for a foray consists of one or more adventurers. The **party level** is the equal to the total of all characters' levels, divided by the number of adventurers or by 4, whichever is greater. Round fractions of 0.5 or greater up, 0.49 or lower down. (Put another way, for parties of four or more adventurers, party level is equal to the average of the characters' levels, while for parties of less than four adventurers, party level is equal to the sum of the characters' levels divided by 4.)

EXAMPLE: The Claws of the Lioness are a party consisting of Ranya, a 4th level bladedancer; Girdanus Tarvo, a 3rd level fighter; Yrsa, a 4th level witch; and Maon, a 2nd level elven spellsword. The party level is $[(4 + 3 + 4 + 2) / 4]$ 3.25, rounded to 3.

EXAMPLE #2: Moruvai, a 9th level ruinguard, enters a dungeon alone. The party level for his foray is $(9 / 4)$ 2.25, rounded to 2.

Parties of more than four adventurers gain a bonus in forays, discussed below.

THE DUNGEON

A dungeon has both a **size** and a **level**. The size of the dungeon determines how many encounters it has, and the level determines how difficult those encounters are.

To find out how many encounters are in the dungeon, the Judge should roll or choose a number on the Encounters by Dungeon Size table, below.

Dungeon Size	Encounters
Small	1d3
Medium	2d3
Large	2d6
Mega	10d6

The Judge should assign a dungeon level based on the difficulty of the encounters found in the dungeon (dungeon levels are defined from 1-6 as per ACKS Core). Presented at the end, in the Optional Rules section, are random tables for determining dungeon size and level.

In the case of a multi-level dungeon, treat each level as a separate dungeon. Access to lower levels may require clearing some or all of the encounters of a previous level, or they may all be accessible independently, at the Judge's discretion.

RESOLUTION

The interaction between party level and dungeon level determines the base difficulty and base modifier to the resolution roll. Consult the table below and find the party's party level in the row for the appropriate dungeon level (see below if the party level is not listed in the row for the dungeon level). The value in the top row of that column is the base **resolution modifier** for that foray. The adjective in the row below it describes the relative **difficulty** of the foray.

Base Resolution Modifier							
	-8	-4	-2	0	+2	+4	+8
Dungeon Level	Apocalyptic	Horrifying	Dangerous	Accessible	Easy	Simple	Effortless
1	-	-	-	1	2-3	4-5	6-7
2	-	-	1	2-3	4-5	6-7	8-9
3	-	1	2-3	4-5	6-7	8-9	10-11
4	1	2-3	4-5	6-7	8-9	10-11	12-13
5	2-3	4-5	6-7	8-9	10-11	12-13	14
6	4-5	6-7	8-9	10-11	12-13	14	-

EXAMPLE: The Claws of the Lioness are a 3rd level party of four adventurers. The party is foraying into the Buried Temple of Sakkara, a 1st level dungeon. On the Dungeon Level 1 row, a party level of 2-3 results in a resolution modifier of +2 (Easy difficulty).

UNDER- OR OVER-STRENGTH PARTIES

If the party level is off the table, move up or down a number of rows until the party's level is reached. Consider your difficulty to be an additional number of columns to the right (easier) for each row you moved down, or an additional number of columns to the left (harder) for each row you moved up. For each column to the left you are off the table, apply an additional -8 penalty. There is no additional bonus for being off the table to the right; there is always some chance of failure, but sometimes there is no chance of success.

EXAMPLE: The Claws of the Lioness launch a foray into the Ruined City of Zahar, a 6th level dungeon. Consulting the Base Resolution Modifier table, the Judge sees that the party level of 3 is off the table. The Judge shifts up one row to reach party level 2-3, with a resolution modifier of -8 (Apocalyptic difficulty). Since he moved one row up, he now shifts one row to the left to calculate the resolution modifier. That moves him one column off the table, triggering an additional -8 penalty, or -16 total!

NUMBER OF ENCOUNTERS

The number of encounters attempted in a foray factors into the resolution modifier as well. Consult the table below to see the adjustment made. A positive number moves the difficulty that many columns to the left, while a negative number moves the difficulty that many columns to the right. (That is, a positive number means that they are easier, while a negative number means they are harder.)

Resolution Modifier by Encounters Attempted	
Encounters	Resolution Modifier
1	+1
2	0
3-5	-1
6-8	-2
9-12	-3
Each additional 3	Additional -1

GROUP SIZE

If there are five to seven adventurers, the party receives a +1 bonus to the resolution roll. If there are eight or more adventurers, the party receives a +2 bonus.

There is no penalty for having a small party, because if there are less than four adventurers, the party level will have been calculated as the sum of all levels divided by four, instead of being the average level. (A single 14th level character in a first level dungeon would count as a 4th level party, giving them a +4 modifier.)

THE RESOLUTION TABLE

Once the total modifier is known, roll 1d8+1d12 on the resolution table, adding the resolution modifier to the result.

Resolution	
Roll (1d8+1d12)	Result
2-	Catastrophic
3-5	Dreadful
6-8	Unsatisfactory
9-12	Indifferent
13-16	Satisfactory
17-19	Excellent
20+	Stupendous

Catastrophic: Every adventurer is slain. An expedition may be sent to retrieve their bodies; if the new party successfully fully clears the dungeon, they may retrieve the bodies of the fallen in lieu of treasure. (They receive experience as normal for encounters defeated.)

Dreadful: 1d6 adventurers suffer mortal wounds. No treasure is earned from this set of encounters.

Unsatisfactory: 1d4-1 adventurers suffer mortal wounds. Only 50% of normal treasure is earned from this set of encounters.

Indifferent: 1d3-2 adventurers suffer mortal wounds. 100% of normal treasure is earned from this set of encounters.

Satisfactory: 1d4-3 adventurers suffer mortal wounds. 125% of normal treasure is earned from this set of encounters.

Excellent: 1d6-5 adventurers suffer mortal wounds. 150% of normal treasure is earned from this set of encounters.

Stupendous: On a stupendous result, no adventurers suffer mortal wounds, and 200% of normal treasure is earned from this set of encounters.

When one or more adventurers suffer a mortal wound, determine which adventurer was injured randomly. An adventurer who suffers a mortal wound may no longer participate in the expedition until they recover. Roll for the specific mortal wound, using only the adventurer's Constitution modifier as a modifier to the d20. If the mortal wound requires that the adventurer be healed to 1 HP, it is assumed that this successfully happens as long as the party has either an unwounded spellcaster who can heal or an unwounded adventurer with Healing proficiency. If the party has neither of those available, an adventurer whose mortal wound requires that they be healed to 1 HP dies, unless they can be brought back to civilization in the time allotted.

EXAMPLE: A party of four 14th level characters find themselves in front of a 1st level dungeon. Bored, they decide to slaughter its inhabitants. The Judge informs them that this dungeon has twelve encounters; they laugh and say they will fight all twelve. Facing 11 encounters on a single foray has a difficulty modifier of -3. The listed level for Effortless on a first level dungeon is 6-7, so the 14th level characters are off the table. They count down rows until they find their level, which requires going down four rows. Going down four rows means they should consider themselves to be four columns to the right of Effortless. Moving back three columns to the left (the -3 penalty for encounters) still leaves them a full column to the right of Effortless, giving them an additional +8 modifier. Their total resolution modifier is $8 + 8 - 3 = +15$. They roll $1d12+1d8+15$ on the Resolution Table and score a 25 – a Stupendous success. They slaughter the dungeon's inhabitants mercilessly and reap 200% of normal treasure.

AFTER THE FORAY

Each foray requires one day to delve, plus one day of rest, for a total of two days per foray, in addition to any healing time that mortal wounds may require.

After the foray is resolved, if the dungeon is not fully cleared, additional monsters may arrive while the adventurers recuperate. Roll the listed die for the dungeon size on the Dungeon Restocking table. Add the result to the number of encounters remaining in the dungeon, up to the maximum of the original number of encounters in the dungeon. A roll of zero (or less) indicates that no new monsters arrived after that foray.

EXAMPLE: A party has undertaken an expedition to a small dungeon that had three encounters originally. In their first foray, they clear one encounter, leaving two remaining. While the adventurers recuperate, the Judge rolls 1d3-1 to see if new monsters arrive. The die roll is a 2, so that increases the number of encounters in the dungeon from two to four. However, the dungeon only had three encounters originally, so it is capped at three encounters.

Dungeon Restocking	
Dungeon Size	Encounters Restocked
Small	1d3-1
Medium	2d3-2
Large	2d6-3
Mega	2d12-5

Encounters that arrive as a result of restocking grant combat experience as normal, but carry no treasure; ignore the Treasure result of the resolution roll and consider it to be 0 for any restocked encounter.

TREASURE AND EXPERIENCE

After each foray, a party receives an amount of treasure and experience determined by the number of encounters defeated and the level of the dungeon. A party that fails to fully clear the dungeon receives only one-quarter the indicated amount of treasure, but full experience for the encounters they defeated.

Consult the Treasure and Experience by Dungeon Level table for the amount of treasure and experience gained per defeated encounter. The total number of encounters defeated should be counted up as forays are resolved, with a running total of gold and XP earned thus far kept. The final calculation of treasure and experience earned should be done only when the party chooses to withdraw entirely or fully clears the dungeon.

Treasure and Experience by Dungeon Level		
Dungeon Level	XP Per Encounter	Treasure Per Encounter
1	90	360
2	140	560
3	320	1280
4	625	2500
5	1835	7340
6	4795	19180

MAGIC ITEMS

Parties that fully clear a dungeon may find magical items as well as gold. Each dungeon level has a varying chance of items being present as well as variable amount of items found. The Magical Items table, below, shows how often to roll and which treasure type to roll as. In all cases, the mechanic is to roll for magical items per X full gold pieces found. When rolling for magic items, use the treasure type only to roll for magical items; do not roll for gold, gems, jewelry, or anything else. (Everything with a GP value is abstracted into the amount of gold found already.)

Magical Items		
Dungeon Level	GP Per Roll	Treasure Type
1	1000	D
2	1250	E
3	3250	I
4	6000	L
5	22000	Q
6	45000	R

ALLOCATING XP

If the adventuring party is PCs, or NPCs acting on their own behalf, they retain all earned treasure and experience and gain experience from treasure found as normal. If the adventuring party is henchmen or followers, their employer gains no combat XP, and the henchmen or followers receive half combat XP. The henchmen or followers receive half of all loot found (gaining XP from retained loot as normal), with the other half going to the employer, for whom it is treated as campaign XP (affected by GP threshold mechanics as normal).

EXAMPLE OF ABSTRACT DUNGEON RESOLUTION

Marcus, a 12th level fighter, has established a domain in a borderlands hex. In an adjacent hex, he discovers a small ruined fort. He and his other high-level companions are occupied with pressing matters of war and politics, so they dispatch their six 2nd level henchmen to clear out the ruins.

The Judge has determined that the ruined fort counts as a small dungeon, and he has assigned it a dungeon level of 1. The Judge rolls for the number of encounters and finds that this is a three-encounter dungeon. Because there are six second-level henchmen, the party level is $[(2 + 2 + 2 + 2 + 2 + 2) / 6] 2$.

The Judge first consults the Base Resolution Modifier table to determine the base resolution modifier. He sees that a 2nd level party in a 1st level dungeon has a base resolution modifier of +2 (Easy). Because there are six adventurers in the party, they receive a +1 bonus, for a total of +3.

The players declare that their henchmen will attempt to clear out only two of the three encounters in their first foray. Consulting the Resolution Modifier by Encounters Attempted table, the Judge sees that attempting two encounters has no modifier.

It's time to roll on the Resolution table. They roll 1d8+1d12, and the total is an unfortunately low 5! Even with the party's +3 modifier, the resulting 8 is an Unsatisfactory outcome. Two encounters are successfully cleared, but only 50% treasure is earned from them. Clearing two encounters on a first level dungeon is worth 180 XP and 720 gp worth of treasure normally; halving this treasure means that the running total so far is 180 XP and 360 GP.

In addition, 1d4-1 adventurers suffer mortal wounds. A roll of 3-1 = 2 on this d4 means that two of the adventurers suffer mortal wounds, and can no longer participate in forays.

The Judge now rolls on the Dungeon Restocking table. Since the ruined fort is a small dungeon, he rolls 1d3-1. The roll is a 1, modified to 0, so no new monsters have arrived and just one encounter remains in the dungeon.

The players consider their options; if they withdraw without clearing the dungeon, they have no chance at magic items, and they would receive only 25% of the 360 gp they have managed to find so far. They decide to send the henchmen back in for a second foray to clear the dungeon. With a party level of 2, and a dungeon level of 1, their base modifier is +2. The party has been reduced to four combat-ready henchmen, which removes the party's +1 modifier for size. However, with only one encounter left to be cleared, they move the difficulty one row to the right on the base difficulty table, giving them a final modifier of +4.

They roll 1d8+1d12 for their second foray, and roll a 15, for a modified total of 19! This Excellent result earns them 150% treasure from this encounter. Only 1d6-5 adventurers suffer mortal wounds; the 1d6 roll is a 4 so no one suffered harm. The Judge adds another 90 XP and $(360 * 1.5)$ 540 GP is added to what has been found thus far.

With the dungeon safely cleared, the adventurers can retain all of their gains, for a total of 270 XP and 900 GP. Sadly, this is not enough GP to roll for magic items (a level 1 dungeon requires a full 1,000 GP per magic item roll). Because this adventuring party is composed of henchmen, they receive half combat XP, plus XP for the 50% of the gold they get to retain, for a total of $(135 + 450) = 585$ XP gained (to be divided among them as normal).

The henchmen return to their employers with loot to divide and stories to tell, with only one in three among them having been maimed by the experience.

Note that in this example, the players made all the decisions about their henchman; as always, at the Judge's discretion, the henchmen may make their own decisions. Perhaps after seeing two among them maimed the first time they went into a dungeon, they decided that two encounters was enough! If that were the case, they would walk out of the dungeon with only 25% of the running total of treasure, giving them base earnings of 180 XP plus 90 GP. (As henchmen, they would gain only half XP from the combat and keep half of that treasure.) In addition, even if 25% of earned treasure had been sufficient to qualify for a magic item roll, failing to fully clear the dungeon would prevent them from getting to roll.

Remember also that a henchman receiving a mortal wound usually qualifies as a calamity, and grounds for a loyalty check. For the purpose of this example, we assumed both maimed henchmen are loyal and decided to stay with the party, but that will not always be true!

OPTIONAL RULES

A variety of optional rules or expanded rules can be used with abstract dungeons. Although the system above will work perfectly fine on its own, these options can reduce bookkeeping or assist in random generation.

OPTIONAL: ABSTRACT LEVELING

If the Judge doesn't want to track XP for the adventuring party, he can use abstract leveling instead. In this system, every 500 XP earned by the party generates one experience tick. Divide experience ticks among the party. No character may receive a second experience tick until everyone else has received one (and same with third and everyone else getting a second, and so on). If one party member is lower level than the others, they must always receive an experience tick when possible.

If a number not evenly divisible by 500 XP is earned from the expedition, there is a percentage chance of gaining an experience tick equal to the leftover percentage of 500 XP earned. For example, if 250 XP was earned, there is a 50% chance of gaining an experience tick. If 750 was earned, one tick is earned, plus a 50% chance of a second one.

When a character has experience ticks equal to four times their level, they gain a level, and their experience ticks are reset to zero.

Optional Hybrid version: Divide the XP cost for the character's class to reach level 2 by 500 and round to the nearest whole number. When the character of that class has a number of experience ticks equal to that number times their level, they gain a level. For example, a Nobiran Wonderworker, who requires 3,125 XP to reach level 2, would need experience ticks equal to six times their level, instead of four times, to level up.

OPTIONAL: UNKNOWN DUNGEON SIZE AND LEVEL

It is a better simulation of actual play if the dungeon size and level are kept secret from the players. When this rule is in effect, the players must go in blind. The party must still declare how many encounters they will face. If they declare a number larger than the actual number remaining in the dungeon, use the modifier only for the number remaining. However, if there is only one encounter remaining, and the party is not aware of that, they receive a +0 modifier instead of +1 (because they needlessly conserve spells and resources).

Players may scout the dungeon instead of clearing encounters. To scout the dungeon, make a resolution roll as normal, as if the party was facing one-third of the total number of encounters in the dungeon. (Again, to a maximum modifier of +0.) Regardless of the result of this resolution roll, they receive neither experience nor treasure, and no encounters are cleared. Instead, they learn either the dungeon level or the number of encounters remaining in the dungeon, at their choice.

OPTIONAL: SITUATIONAL MODIFIERS TO RESOLUTION

If the Judge wants to go into greater detail in the factors that affect dungeon clearing success, heu may optionally apply situational modifiers to the resolution roll. These modifiers should affect the resolution roll directly, rather than altering the base difficulty. Below are examples of some potential situational modifiers.

- Party Missing Key Role: -1 per key role missing. Key roles are fighter, mage, cleric, thief. No adventurer may fill more than one key role at a time, so an elven spellsword could count as a fighter or a mage, but not both at once.
- Well-Balanced Party: +1. A well-balanced party covers all key roles.
- Party Well Prepared for Threats In Dungeon: +2
- Party Poorly Prepared for Threats in Dungeon: -2. An example of being well or poorly prepared would be whether a party brought wolfsbane, belladonna, and silver weapons to fight against werewolves.
- Party Has Unexpectedly Powerful Magic: +1. An example of this might be the PCs lending their henchmen some useful and powerful magic items before sending them off to clear a dungeon.

Generally speaking, a modifier of +/- 1 can be applied for things that are nice but not necessary, while things that are extraordinarily valuable or important receive a modifier of +/- 2. With a few exceptions for things that are suicidal or all but guaranteed, any individual situational modifier should not exceed plus or minus two.

OPTIONAL: FINDING MONSTER PARTS

A party might wish to retrieve monster parts from the dungeon. They may exchange treasure found for monster parts, up to a limit of their metamphora capacity or the XP of defeated monsters, whichever is lower. This exchange does not alter their chance to find magical items.

A party that defeats three encounters in a first-level dungeon has earned a base of 270 XP and 1080 GP. If they desire, they may trade 270 GP worth of that 1080 GP for monster parts instead, assuming they have the metamphora to store 270 GP worth of monster parts, giving them 270 XP earned, plus 270 GP worth of monster parts, plus 810 GP.

The specific monster that the parts come from should be determined by the Judge. They may allow the seeking out of a dungeon of specific monsters, or may roll on a dungeon or wilderness encounter chart, as they feel is appropriate for the situation.

OPTIONAL: TRAVEL TIME TO DUNGEONS

A Judge might not wish to fill out his campaign map with every possible dungeon in every possible hex. The Travel Time rules allow a Judge to not need to know where exactly these dungeons that are being cleared are beforehand; simply roll to find how far away they are from the point that the adventurers set out from. (Usually, this will be a fort, town or city of some kind.)

Random Travel Time	
Dungeon Size	Travel Time
Small	1d6 days
Medium	2d6 days
Large	1d6 weeks
Mega	1d6 months

The level of civilization of the starting point affects the distance to dungeons. After rolling for base travel time, multiply the result by the starting point modifier: 4x base time if the starting point is Civilized, 2x base time if the starting point is Borderlands, and 1x base time if the starting point is Wilderness.

Note that the travel time given is one-way, and it will require an equal amount of time to return.

OPTIONAL: RANDOM DUNGEON SIZE AND LEVEL

If the Judge does not want to decide what size and level a randomly located dungeon is, he may determine their values randomly. Roll 1d100 for each on the tables below.

Random Dungeon Level	
Level	Roll (1d100)
1	1-51
2	52-77
3	78-90
4	91-96
5	97-99
6	100

Random Dungeon Size	
Size	Roll (1d100)
Small	1-54
Medium	55-81
Large	82-98
Mega	99-100

OPTIONAL: MULTIPLE FORAYS

Some parties may wish to push their luck and continue foraying after defeating encounters already. Optionally, this may be allowed. However, the encounter modifier for forays after the first should be calculated based on the total number of encounters that day, plus an additional -1 penalty per foray after the first.

For example, a party has forayed and cleared two encounters already, before finding that they now have access to a lower dungeon level. They decide to immediately charge on downwards and declare two encounters on the lower level. Their encounter-based difficulty modifier is calculated as if they had declared four encounters (a penalty of -1), plus an additional -1 for being their second foray of the day, for a total of -2 difficulty steps. If they survived that, and declared two more encounters, their penalty would be -2 (for six encounters), plus an additional -2 (for being the third foray), for a total of -4 steps. This example party who has pushed their luck this far has likely died at this point.