

The Fine Art of Monster Conversion

A Basic Fantasy RPG Supplement

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INTRODUCTION

Basic Fantasy Role-Playing Game (BFRPG) is based upon the d20 game engine. This short document will show the process of converting monster statistics from the d20 SRD format to BFRPG. As an example, we will convert a 3.5e monster.

Consider the 3.5e Couatl below:

Couatl

Size/Type: Large Outsider (Native)

Hit Dice: 9d8+18 (58 hp)

Initiative: +7

Speed: 20 ft. (4 squares), fly 60 ft. (good)

Armor Class: 21 (-1 size, +3 Dex, +9 natural), touch 12, flat-footed 18

Base Attack/Grapple: +9/+17

Attack: Bite +12 melee (1d3+6 plus poison)

Full Attack: Bite +12 melee (1d3+6 plus poison)

Space/Reach: 10 ft./5 ft.

Special Attacks: Constrict 2d8+6, improved grab, poison, psionics, spells

Special Qualities: Darkvision 60 ft., change shape, ethereal jaunt, telepathy 90 ft.

Saves: Fort +8, Ref +9, Will +10

Abilities: Str 18, Dex 16, Con 14, Int 17, Wis 19, Cha 17

Skills: Concentration +14, Diplomacy +17, Jump +0, Knowledge (any two) +15, Listen +16, Search +15, Sense Motive +16, Spellcraft +15 (+17 scrolls), Spot +16, Survival +4 (+6 following tracks), Tumble +15, Use Magic Device +15 (+17 scrolls)

Feats: Dodge, Empower Spell, Eschew Materials, Hover, Improved Initiative

Environment: Warm forests

Organization: Solitary, pair, or flight (3-6)

Challenge Rating: 10

Treasure: Standard

Alignment: Always lawful good

Advancement: 10-13 HD (Large); 14-27 HD (Huge)

Level Adjustment: +7

A couatl is about 12 feet long, with a wingspan of about 15 feet. It weighs about 1,800 pounds. Couatls speak Celestial, Common, and Draconic, and also have the power of telepathy (see below).

Combat

A couatl uses its detect thoughts ability on any creature that arouses its suspicions. Since it is highly intelligent, a couatl usually casts spells from a distance before closing. If more than one couatl is involved, they discuss their strategy before a battle.

Constrict (Ex)

A couatl deals 2d8+6 points of damage with a successful grapple check.

Improved Grab (Ex)

To use this ability, a couatl must hit a creature of up to two size categories larger with its bite attack. It can then attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity. If it wins the grapple check, it establishes a hold and can constrict.

Poison (Ex)

Injury, Fortitude DC 16, initial damage 2d4 Str, secondary damage 4d4 Str.

The save DC is Constitution-based.

Psionics (Sp)

At will-detect chaos, detect evil, detect good, detect law, detect thoughts (DC 15), invisibility, plane shift (DC 20). Effective caster level 9th. The save DCs are Charisma-based.

Spells

A couatl casts spells as a 9th-level sorcerer.

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It can choose its spells known from the sorcerer list, the cleric list, and from the lists for the Air, Good, and Law domains. The cleric spells and domain spells are considered arcane spells for a couatl, meaning that the creature does not need a divine focus to cast them.

Typical Spells Known (6/7/7/7/4; save DC 13 + spell level)

0-cure minor wounds, daze, disrupt undead, light, obscuring mist, ray of frost, read magic, resistance; 1st-endure elements, mage armor, protection from chaos, true strike, wind wall; 2nd-cure moderate wounds, eagle's splendor, scorching ray, silence; 3rd-gaseous form, magic circle against evil, summon monster III; 4th-charm monster, freedom of movement.

Change Shape (Su)

A couatl can assume the form of any Small or Medium humanoid.

Ethereal Jaunt (Su)

This ability works like the ethereal jaunt spell (caster level 16th).

Telepathy (Su)

A couatl can communicate telepathically with any creature within 90 feet that has an Intelligence score. The creature can respond to the couatl if it wishes-no common language is needed.

That's a lot of information! There's a good chance that most of it will never be used in a game, even if the creature is used in combat. First, the easy parts of the conversion: there are no BFRPG equivalents of the SRD stats below, so they may be ignored.

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Skills: Concentration +14, Diplomacy +17, Jump +0, Knowledge (any two) +15, Listen +16, Search +15, Sense Motive +16, Spellcraft +15 (+17 scrolls), Spot +16, Survival +4 (+6 following tracks), Tumble +15, Use Magic Device +15 (+17 scrolls)

Feats: Dodge, Empower Spell, Eschew Materials, Hover, Improved Initiative

Challenge Rating: 10

Alignment: Always lawful good

Advancement: 10-13 HD (Large); 14-27 HD (Huge)

Level Adjustment: +7

This leaves the following to be converted:

Armor Class: 21 (-1 size, +3 Dex, +9 natural), touch 12, flat-footed 18

Hit Dice: 9d8+18 (58 hp)

Attack: Bite +12 melee (1d3+6 plus poison)

Base Attack/Grapple: +9/+17

Special Attacks: Constrict 2d8+6, improved grab, poison, psionics, spells

Special Qualities: Darkvision 60 ft., change shape, ethereal jaunt, telepathy 90 ft.

Speed: 20 ft. (4 squares), fly 60 ft. (good)

Organization: Solitary, pair, or flight (3-6)

Treasure: Standard

Saves: Fort +8, Ref +9, Will +10

Environment: Warm forests

Of these stats, AC, Hit Dice, Attack, Base Attack/Grapple, Speed and Environment are the easiest to convert.

AC: AC is usually a 1:1 conversion; in the case of the Couatl this would be 21. (Ignore the 3.5e AC breakdown.) However, because d20 monsters often have very high armor class values, above 25 the ratio should be 1:2, so that 25-26 = 25, 27-28 = 26, 29-30 = 27, etc. Otherwise, 3.5e monsters with very high armor classes become unhittable when converted.

Hit Dice: The monster's Hit Dice in 3.5e can vary. The example creature just happens to use a d8. To convert the Hit Dice, simply drop the d(x) so 9d8+18 will become 9+18. However, note that in BFRPG the "plus" value

added to the monster's hit dice does not affect the chance of hitting in combat; it is recommended that large hit die "plus" values be converted to actual hit dice, with one hit die being added for each 4.5 points of bonus removed. This would result in the Couatl having 13 hit dice.

Attack, Damage, and "To Hit" Bonus: The 3.5e attack contains both the attack information as well as the damage caused. Move the attack (e.g., Bite) to the BFRPG monster's attack. Special Attacks are noted as "+ special". The "to hit" bonus is not normally used (as the monster's attack bonus is taken from the table in the BFRPG core rules), but if desired the 3.5e stat may be retained; move the bonus from either the 3.5e attack line or the first bonus from the "Base Attack/Grapple" to the Hit Dice line above inside parenthesis.

Damage: This is easy to convert. Physical damage is moved to the BFRPG Damage stat. Special Damage is noted as well.

Special Attacks and Special Qualities: The number of special attacks in the 3.5e stat block will determine the number of "*" to be added to the Hit Dice number. Both Special Attacks and Special Qualities should be described in the monster description. Feel free to omit some asterisks if the monster has many special abilities but not all are likely to be used in a given combat.

Speed: This stat should be placed in the BFRPG "Movement" field. Maneuverability should be converted from 3.5e to BFRPG as follows:

Perfect = Type A
Good = Type B
Average = Type D
Poor = Type F
Clumsy = Type H

Organization: This will need to be interpreted for the BFRPG "No. Appearing" stat. Use your best judgment to convert from the 3.5e to the BFRPG "Wild/Lair" or refer to an earlier edition Monster Manual stat block.

Treasure: This is the most difficult part of the conversion. If there is a 1e or 2e Monster Manual available, compare the Treasure Type from the monster's stat block in the older work and select a type or types that are similar in BFRPG. If not, make an educated guess as to what that monster would have.

Saving Throws: Monster saving throws are usually rolled on the Fighter Saving Throw table. Discard the 3.5e saving throws and replace them with a Fighter level value, generally equal to the hit dice of the creature (unless another character class is more appropriate).

Morale: Morale checks are rolled on 2d6 in BFRPG. There is no 3.5e equivalent to this statistic. To determine the morale of a creature use the following table:

2	Runs away if it can.
3 – 5	Almost always runs.
6 – 7	Normal, will run if companions run.
8 – 9	Stable, will stay and fight if companions stay and fight.
10 – 11	Loyal, will stay and fight most of the time.
12	Fanatical, these guys are insane!

The Morale stat from a 1E or 2E Monster Manual (if available) may be of assistance in determining this value.

XP Value: The experience point value for the creature is calculated as per the XP Values table in Character Advancement in the BFRPG core rules.

Environment: The environment stat should be included in the monster description below the stat block.

Once all of the stats are moved to their new positions and the description edited, we would have something that looks like this:

Couatl

Armor Class: 21

Hit Dice: 13**** (+10)

No of Attacks: 1 Bite + special

Damage: 1d3 + poison/2d8

Movement: 20' Fly 60'

No. Appearing: 1d6 Wild/Lair 1d2

Save as: F9

Morale: 12

Treasure Type: B, I

XP Value: 1375

A couatl is about 12 feet long, with a wingspan of about 15 feet. It weighs about 1,800 pounds and can be found in warm forests. They can speak the Common tongue, as well as communicate telepathically with any creature within 90 feet that has an Intelligence score. The target creature can respond to the couatl if it wishes—no common language is needed. They have Darkvision to 60 ft

A couatl uses its ESP ability on any creature that arouses its suspicions. Since it is highly intelligent, a couatl usually casts spells from a distance before closing. If more than one couatl is involved, they discuss their strategy before a battle. A couatl deals 2d8+6 points of constriction

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damage with a successful hit with its bite attack. The bite injects a deadly poison and the victim must save vs. poison or die.

A couatl has these spell-like abilities and may use them at will—detect evil, ESP and invisibility. A couatl casts spells as a 9th-level wizard and can choose its spells known from the wizard and cleric list. The cleric spells are considered arcane spells for a couatl, meaning that the creature does not need a deity to cast them.

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A couatl can polymorph itself into any small or medium humanoid as well as become intangible. When intangible, the couatl is invisible, insubstantial, and capable of moving in any direction, even up or down, albeit at half normal speed. As an intangible creature, it can move through solid objects, including living creatures. It can see and hear on the Material Plane, but everything looks gray and ephemeral. Sight and hearing onto the Material Plane are limited to 60 feet.

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