

A WEIGHTY MATTER

A revised, lighter Encumbrance system for *Mazes & Minotaurs*

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Mazes & Minotaurs may be the greatest game ever created since the invention of chess, but most Mazemasters and M&M players agree on the fact that the encumbrance rules are, to put it mildly, complete rubbish : obviously incomplete, blatantly unbalanced and utterly flawed.

As the system now stands, you need a Might of 9+ to be able to wear a full armor (helmet, breastplate and shield), which may make sense... but if you just want to carry a spear and a sword on top of that, you need a Might of 14+, which is completely absurd. Things get worse when you try to carry someone else, since the rules state that a character cannot carry more than 3 points of encumbrance over his Might score : under these conditions, it is *impossible* for a normally equipped Spearman to carry a wounded comrade on his shoulders.

Furthermore, the rules give no encumbrance values for missile weapons – a golden opportunity for yet more absurd situations or system abuse by unscrupulous players : if the current encumbrance rules are applied to the letter, our fully armored Spearman might not be able to add a sword to his armament... but he could carry hundreds of arrows in dozens of quivers on his back (not to mention several bows). If anything, these absurd situations prove that the encumbrance rules were an hasty addition to the system and were probably never seriously tested in the first place.

The purpose of this article is to present a revised encumbrance system for M&M – a system that makes sense and avoid all the absurd situations mentioned above, without burdening (pun intended !) the system with cumbersome (pun intended !) complications.

Armor & Weapons

Armor encumbrance should be reduced by 1pt, ie 2 for a shield, 1 for a helmet and 3 for a breastplate. These items may be heavy, but one must not forget that (a) they have been specifically designed for being worn and (b) encumbrance points reflect the overall bulkiness of an object, not its actual weight.

The same treatment should be applied to melee weapons, ie 2pts for a spear, 1pt for a sword and zero for a dagger (since, and I quote, « easily carried items (...) have an Encumbrance of zero »). So, under these revised rules, a Spearman in full armor, carrying shield, sword and spear would have an encumbrance total of 9 instead of 14 – which makes far more sense, since Might is not the Spearman's prime requisite.

What about missile weapons ? Javelins are, well, spears and should be given the same encumbrance value (2pts). Slings and slingshot can be counted as zero-encumbrance items. A bow and a quiver should each have an encumbrance of 1, making a total of 2pts for an archer's equipment. The actual encumbrance of individual arrows can be ignored for game purposes.

Treasure & Other Items

Clearly, the only thing that should be left unchanged is the encumbrance value for coins – so I guess the original system was not *completely* rotten. But have you noticed that the rules say nothing about carrying sack of gems or jewels ?

The best way to handle such situations is to use the encumbrance of coins as a guideline, applying an approximative size ratio to the total encumbrance value, ie a sack of 100 gems that are roughly twice as big as gold or silver coins will have a total encumbrance value of 2 (instead of 1 for an equivalent number of coins).

Likewise, mythic items *which are not explicitly stated as having a specific encumbrance value* should be given an encumbrance value based equivalent to that of the nearest weapon or item in terms of size, bulk etc : a quarterstaff, for instance, should have the same encumbrance as a spear.

Carry that Weight !

Characters can now carry up to twice his Might score worth of encumbrance points.

Thus, a character with a Might of 18 will be heavily encumbered if his total goes over 18 but will be able to carry up to 36 encumbrance points.

An unconscious or dead person should still be counted as 10 encumbrance points, in addition to the encumbrance of his equipment.

Thus, carrying a comrade with breastplate, shield, helmet, spear and sword adds 15 to encumbrance (instead of 25 with the original system !).

Final Word

Did you notice that the M&M rules said *absolutely nothing* about the possibly problematic interactions of armor and magic ?

Can you believe this ?