The Mother of All Encounter Tables

Credits

Design
Bill Webb and Greg Ragland

Author
Greg Ragland

Developer
Bill Webb

Producer
Clark Peterson

Editor
Bill Webb

D20 Content Editor
Scott Greene

Art Director
Davis Chenault

Layout and Typesetting
Charles A. Wright

Interior Art
Heather Hudson

Front & Back Cover Design
Ed Bourelle

Playtesters
The numerous players in Bill’s, Greg’s, and Clark’s games!

Special Thanks
Our fans who visit our website for input and assistance.

This product requires the use of the Dungeons and Dragons® Player’s Handbook, published by Wizards of the Coast®.

©2003 Clark Peterson, Necromancer Games, Inc. All rights reserved. Reproduction without the written permission of the publisher is expressly forbidden. Necromancer Games, Necromancer Games, Inc. and the Necromancer Games logo, The Tomb of Abysthor, Bard’s Gate, Demons and Devils, The Crucible of Freya, The Wrath of Orcus, Rappan Athuk and The Dungeon of Graves are trademarks of Necromancer Games, Inc. All rights reserved. All characters, names, places, items, art and text herein are copyrighted by Necromancer Games, Inc. Creature Collection, Creature Collection 2 and Relics and Rituals are trademarks of Sword and Sorcery Studio and are used by permission. “D20 System” and the D20 System logo are trademarks owned by Wizards of the Coast and are used under the terms of the D20 Trademark License. Dungeons and Dragons® and Wizards of the Coast® are trademarks of Wizards of the Coast and are used in accordance with the Open Game License contained in the Legal Appendix.

This book uses the supernatural for settings, characters and themes. All mystical and supernatural elements are fiction and intended for entertainment purposes only. Reader discretion is advised.

Check out Necromancer Games online at http://www.necromancergames.com

And check out Troll Lord Games online at http://www.trolllord.com

PRINTED IN THE USA.
INTRODUCTION

Introduction

Welcome to the Mother of All Encounter Tables!

I think you will agree this book lives up to its title. It contains nothing but tables, tables and more tables full of encounters and special events. This book is a DM’s best friend.

Find yourself preparing for a game session and noticing you tend to create the same type of encounter again and again. Need some ideas to help you break out of the normal orcs and ogres type of encounter? Perhaps your players wandered off somewhere you hadn’t planned for them to go and you need an encounter right away. Or maybe they are roaming the shadowed alleys of their favorite fantasy city and you want to know who or what they run into. Are your players exploring the dark caverns beneath the earth or a deadly dungeon of your own devising? Then this book is for you.

This is not just a random book of tables, but a well thought out DM utility that makes wilderness travel, city streets and dungeon corridors all more interesting. It contains encounters for each terrain type from mountains to seas, in each climate from arctic to tropical, and has separate tables for day and night encounters. Also factored in are relative rarities of individual encounters. Space has even been left for you to insert new monsters from your own favorite books.

In addition to encounters with monsters and men, there are tables for unusual weather events, strange occurrences, accidents, and encounters with NPCs. Trade routes and caravans are detailed as well as trolls and dragons. After all, you never know when ants will infest your players’ food, or when the cleric will get struck by lightning!

When To Use This Book

We love tables. And if you picked up this book then chances are you do, too. Though there are probably hundreds of reasons why you might use this book, we have found three primary times that we wind up pulling this book off the shelf or out of our backpacks.

1. Random Encounters. The most obvious use for a series of random encounter tables is, of course, for random encounters. Your players wander into an area that you hadn’t expected them to go and you need an encounter. No problem. Follow the rules below and you will have a few encounters suitable for the appropriate situation in no time.

2. Session Preparation. You know that your players are heading through the Jungle of Death and you want to prepare some encounters ahead of time. Roll a few results. Get creative. Choose the best ones. This is perhaps our favorite way to use this book (not that using it on the fly isn’t great). I don’t know about you, but I always find myself using a normal group of “staple” monsters in my encounters. Undead. Ogres. Trolls. Using these tables, we believe, will help you break out of your encounter design rut if you are in one and perhaps try monsters as encounters that you would not ordinarily use even if you weren’t in a rut.

3. Idea Resources. Unlike session prep where you know the type of encounter you need, idea generation is just taking a random result or two and using that idea to create a story or a lair or an adventure. Use these tables to help you create fresh ideas that you wouldn’t ordinarily come up with yourself. You will find this a really great inspiration as well as a refreshing change. Your players will, too. So use these tables to give you ideas for encounters. And then, once you have generated the encounter, come up with a reason for the existence of the encounter. Turn it into an adventure, or maybe even a mini-campaign. Get creative. Twist things around. Let’s say the encounter you randomly generate are some treants. Make them evil treants. Better yet, infernal treants. Then generate some servant creatures for them. Come up with a reason why they are working together. It is surprising how quick these random ideas get your creative juices flowing in new directions. Now all of a sudden you have a cool adventure idea. All that from a few rolls to generate ideas. Amazing.

Generating Encounters

Generating encounters with this book could not be easier.

1. Turn to Section 1: the Master Tables at the front of this book. That is where it all starts. There, you determine if you want an Overland, Urban, Trade Route, Overseas, Underwater or Subterranean encounter.

2. Roll on the appropriate Master Table using d100, meaning you roll two ten-sided dice reading the first die as the tens digit and the second die as the ones digit. 00 is 100. For example “9, 6” would be 96. “0, 8” would be 8. Using two different color ten-sided dice helps you remember which is the tens digit and which is ones digit.

3. Cross-reference your roll on the Master Table to determine the type of encounter you have. This refers you to the next table. Several of the Master Tables have sub-types. For instance, Trade Route Encounters and Subterranean Encounters require you to specify if the encounter occurs on a Major Road, Secondary Road or a Trail (remember, if there is no road, it is a Overland Encounter); or for the
Subterranean table if the encounter occurs in a Primary Passage, Secondary Passage, Tertiary Passage or if it is in an Aquatic setting.

Your roll on this table then leads you to the next table where you roll your actual encounter. For example, let’s say you need a Subterranean Encounter and you determine your PCs are traveling along a Secondary Passage. You roll d100 on the “Subterranean Encounter” Master Table and look under the “Secondary Passage” column. If you roll a 59, that means you have no encounter. If you roll a 13, that means you have a Creature Encounter and must roll on The Creature Encounter Table, Table 2-7.

4. Determine your climate type, be it arctic, sub-arctic, temperate, sub-tropical or tropical.

5. Find the appropriate sub-table, if any. Some tables have sub-tables. For example, the Subterranean Monster Table is divided into Table 2-7A and 2-7B, the first is for close to the surface and the second is for truly deep below ground (like the Underdark).

6. Roll on the indicated table using d1000. That’s right, d1000. All you have to do is get one more d10 (preferably of a different color than the other two d10s you used above). Go to the table indicated from the result on the Master Table you rolled on above. Roll all three d10s. One is the hundreds digit, the other is the tens digit and the last one is the ones digit. 000 is 1000. Easy as pie. Now cross-reference that result in the relevant column of the table you were guided to from the Master Table.

For example, the “13” you rolled above on the Subterranean Encounter table led you to the Creature Encounter Table (Table 2-7).

7. Determine intent. This is mostly up to you. You don’t have to have every encounter be a combat encounter. Perhaps the creatures want information. Or perhaps they need help. Maybe they want to spy on the party. Or maybe they want to trade with the party. Consult the Player’s Handbook and the DMG for more about NPC attitudes or see the sidebar to randomly generate attitudes.

8. Lather, rinse, repeat until your players have had enough or until you have generated the needed number of encounters.

What This Book Does Not Do

There are a few things this book does not do.

1. It does not dictate how often you should have an encounter. You should refer to the guidelines from the DMG, as detailed in chapter 3, under “Wandering Monsters,” “Random Wilderness Encounters,” and “Urban Encounters” to see what they suggest. Then just do it however you want.

2. It does not divide tables by Encounter Level (“EL”). We leave that to your discretion. It would have been way too confusing to have a sub-table for all 20+ possible ELs for each of the tables in this book. So we decided the best thing was to put them all together. That means the Subterranean Monsters table has EL 1/8 encounters and EL 20 encounters. As the DM you know your group and know what encounters will be best for them. We do list the CR of each monster, however, so that you can compute the final EL of the encounter depending on the number of monsters encountered. See the sidebar for more on how to compute Encounter Levels and also refer
Encounter Levels

The ELs we have listed in the tables are for one of the creature encountered (which is equal to the creature’s Challenge Rating, see the DMG, chapter 3, “Challenge Ratings and Encounter Levels.” The tables, however, provide for a range of numbers of creatures encountered. Encounters with multiple creatures obviously have a higher EL. Here is how to figure the EL of an encounter. Once you get used to it, it is real easy.

Rule of Thumb: for creatures above CR 1, doubling the number of monsters increases the CR by 2. An encounter with 1 doppelganger is EL 3. 2 are EL 5. 4 are EL 7. For creatures of CR 1, adding a second CR 1 monster only raises the EL by 1. From then on, doubling the monsters raises the EL by 2. For creatures less than CR 1, whose CR is expressed as a fraction, multiply the CR by the number of monsters. For example, 8 CR 1/2 orcs would be EL 4. 8 CR 1/4 kobolds would be EL 2.

Mixed Pairs: an encounter that contains several monsters of different CRs is more difficult to determine. Generally, a monster that has a companion creature of a CR 2 lower than the primary creature adds 1 to the EL. Thus, a CR 7 monster with a CR 5 companion monster would have an EL of 8.

Creatures as Groups: In determining mixed pairs when there are large groups of monsters, it is best to determine the EL for each group. For example, let’s take an encounter with 8 orcs and 2 ogres. The orcs are CR 1/2. 8 orcs are EL 4. Ogres are CR 3. 2 ogres are EL 5. Using the mixed pairs rule above, together they are an EL 6 (adding 1 to the higher EL).

3. It is not a substitute for common sense. If you generate an encounter that is certain death or (perhaps even worse) wildly under-challenging for your group, discard or modify it. This book is not an oracle that must be obeyed. It is a tool for you to aid you prepare for sessions and help you with unique encounters in a pinch. You should never, ever justify an encounter to your players by saying “hey, that’s what I rolled in the book.” Again, refer to the DMG, chapter 3, “Challenge Ratings and Encounter Levels.”

If you generate something you think is too hard or too easy, either re-roll or modify what you rolled. If you rolled an encounter that is too easy, you might just roll again and add this new result as the “boss creature” leading the creatures that you generated originally.

For example, let’s say you have a party of four 10th level characters wandering around in a dungeon. You need an encounter. You roll on the Master Table and get a creature encounter from Table 2-7. You use Table 2-7A because they are not that far under ground. You roll “102,” which is a result of 2-12 giant bombardier beetles. You roll 2d6 (which gives you a range of 2-12) and get 4, meaning there are 4 beetles. Each beetle is CR 2, so 4 of them is EL 6.

That is obviously not challenging enough for your PCs. So you roll again. Lets say you roll a 815, a Roper (EL 10, still EL 10 with the beetles)! Perhaps you decide that the Roper uses the beetles as a distraction to attack large opponents, thereby making it easier to take down unsuspecting larger prey. Perhaps he waits until opponents are busy with the beetles, perhaps he uses them “tamed”, and has created a symbiotic relationship with them for sharing food, its all up to you!

4. It doesn’t trump your creativity. The best ideas for your campaign are always your own. This book is an aid. If you roll a result using this book but you think that an encounter that you thought up would be better, scrap the random result and use your idea.

5. It doesn’t promote the idea of “random monsters.” Again, this book is an aid. We aren’t intending to promote the idea that campaigns should be nothing but a string of random encounters. If you don’t want randomness, don’t use this book for that. Use it as a preparation tool.

6. It doesn’t limit you to one roll. As discussed above when you have generated an encounter that is too easy, perhaps you roll a second time and add that second monster as a “boss” monster over the first monsters you generated. Don’t limit yourself. Roll twice. Roll three times. Use those results. Get creative. Come up with a reason for that encounter. It will spark your creativity.

How To Customize This Book

In today’s d20 world there are tons of monster books out there, aside from the official books. Different DMs have different collections. And even DMs with the same collections have different favorite monsters.

We wanted to create a set of tables that were customizable. It will take a little work to customize the charts. That couldn’t be avoided, since there is just no way to know what books each DM owns. This way, our tables are useful to every DM with just a little tweaking. We hope you find that flexibility to your liking. If you don’t want flexibility, see the “Simple Solution” section, below.

Everyone owns the “MM.” The MM? MM stands for “the official monster book by the guys that make the game.