

# Original Dungeons & Dragons Underworld Primer

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Abbreviations:

MM = *Dungeons & Dragons Volume I: Men & Magic*

UW = *Dungeons & Dragons Volume III: The Underworld & Wilderness Adventures*

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## Underworld/Dungeon Exploration Time & Movement

### Scale (UW p. 8)

Distance is measured in feet with each inch (") representing 10 feet. For example, 6" equals 60 feet.

### Encumbrance & Movement Rates (MM p. 15)

- Character movement rates are based on armor, weapons, and load carried.
- Weight is measured in coins.<sup>1</sup>

Movement Rate	Load in Coin Weight
Light Foot Movement (12")	0-750
Heavy Foot Movement (9")	751-1,000
Armored Foot Movement (6")	1,001-1,500
Heavy to Max Loads (3")	1,501-3,000

### Movement & Turns in the Underworld (UW p. 8)

- In the underworld environment, exploration movement consists of two move segments taking approximately ten minutes.
  - *Example: A character moving as armored foot (6") takes 10 minutes to move 12", or 120 feet (i.e., two 6" move segments).*
- Two such move segments represent a single ten-minute turn.
- Characters fleeing or in a pursuit situation will double their moves.
  - *Example: The same character moving as armored foot would move 240 feet per turn when in a flight/pursuit situation.*
- No mapping is allowed in flight/pursuit situations

### Rest in the Underworld (UW p. 8)

- 1 turn must be spent resting motionless for every 1 hour of exploration.
- 2 turns must be spent resting motionless after a flight/pursuit has taken place.

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<sup>1</sup> While such coin weight is an abstract combination of both weight and volume/bulk, the player can get a rough conversion of coin weight to pounds by simply dividing by 10. For example, 0-750 in coin weight might be roughly understood as 0-75 pounds.

## Underworld Exploration

### Actions & Time (UW p. 8)

The Referee will adjudicate actions like searching, loading treasure, listening, using spells like ESP, and so forth in terms of ten-minute turns or portions of a ten-minute turn.

<i>Example Activities</i>	Time Spent
<i>ESP'ing</i>	Quarter of a Turn
<i>Searching a 10-foot section of a wall for a secret passage</i>	1 Turn
<i>Ten rounds of combat</i>	1 Turn

### Secret Doors & Passages (UW p. 9)

<i>Character Type</i>	Success on a d6 Roll to Locate Secret Door/Passage
<i>Humans, Dwarves, &amp; Hobbits/Halflings</i>	1 or a 2
<i>Elves (actively searching)</i>	1-4
<i>Elves (passive detection/awareness)</i>	1 or a 2

### Doors in the Underworld (UW p. 9)

- Generally, doors cannot be opened by simply turning a handle or pushing.
- More often, doors must be forced open by strength. This does not apply to monsters.
- There can be up to three characters attempting to force open a single door, although this inhibits rapid reaction to anything possibly waiting on the other side of a door.
- Most doors automatically close.
  - Doors can be wedged open by means of spikes.
  - However, the spike will slip and the door will close on a 5 or a 6 on a six-sided die roll.

<i>Character Type</i>	Success on a d6 Roll to Force Open a Door
<i>Typical sized characters</i>	1 or a 2
<i>Smaller or lighter characters</i>	1
<i>Above average strength characters</i>	1-3 <sup>2</sup>

### Traps (UW p. 9)

Traps are usually sprung by a roll of a 1 or a 2 on a six-sided die roll.

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<sup>2</sup> This is an interpretation based on my reading of the following statement describing the role of strength in MM on page 10, "Strength will also aid in opening traps and so on." This is also in line with later editions of the game. MM p. 11 states that a score of 9-12 represents average ability scores, while 13-18 represents high ability scores. I tend to grant an open-door bonus to characters with a strength score of 16+, although for certain game contexts/circumstances, I may grant the bonus to characters with a strength score of 13+.

## Listening (UW p. 9)

- Characters may spend time listening to detect sounds. Examples include activities like listening at closed doors.
- Undead creatures do not make sounds.

Character Type	Detect Sounds on a d6 Roll
Humans	1
Elves, Dwarves, & Hobbits/Halflings	1-2

## Light in the Underworld (UW p. 9)

- In the underworld/dungeon environment, characters will require a light source or spells like *Infravision* or *Light* to see.
- Some example light sources include: torches, lanterns, and magic swords.
- While light illuminates the environment, it also allows monsters to see the characters.
- Characters using a light source (besides an *Infravision* spell) will not be able to surprise monsters
  - Exception: coming through a closed door would still provide a chance to surprise monsters on the other side even if using a light source.
- Torches can be blown out due to environmental factors like a gust of wind.
- All monsters not in the employ of characters are assumed to have permanent infravision.<sup>3</sup>

## Dwarves & the Underworld

- Dwarf characters have the following relevant abilities in underground settings:
  - Notice/detect slanting passages
  - Notice/detect traps
  - Notice/detect shifting walls
  - Notice/detect new construction

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<sup>3</sup> Based on my readings of this section on light sources, and the lack of specific statements to the contrary in other sections of the rules, dwarves, elves, and hobbits/halflings do not have “infravision” in OD&D or the any other ability that would allow them to see in the dark without the assistance of a light source. This changes in later editions.

## Encounters in the Underworld

### Wandering Monsters (UW p. 10)

- At the end of every ten-minute turn, the Referee will check for random wandering monsters by rolling a six-sided die.
- A result of 6 indicates that one or more wandering monsters have appeared.
- The direction of the wandering monster is randomly determined based on the number of possible entries/passages. The type of wandering monster is also randomly determined.
- *Note: In OD&D, it is very possible to randomly encounter higher level monsters even on lower levels of a dungeon (e.g., players could still encounter a level 4 monster on the 1st level of a dungeon).*

### Surprise (UW p. 9)

- The condition for surprise can only exist when one or both parties are unaware of the presence of the other.
- Things like ESP'ing, light, and noise will negate surprise.
- For each party in which the possibility of surprise exists, roll 1d6. A result of a 1 or a 2 indicates the party is surprised.
- When there is surprise, distance between the parties is between 10 to 30 feet (1d6: 1-2 = 10, 3-4 = 20, 5-6 =30).
- When there is no surprise, distance between the parties is 20-80 feet (2d4x10).
- Surprise grants the advantage of a free move segment in which to do one of the following: flee, cast a spell, or engage in combat.
  - Monsters that gain surprise will either 1) close the distance between themselves and the characters or 2) attack.
  - Exception: If monsters are intelligent and the opposing party is obviously too strong to attack, they will not close the distance.
  - Note: To engage in melee combat, one must be within 30 feet of an opponent (UW p. 28)
- There is a 25% chance that any character surprised by a monster will drop some randomly determined handheld item. (UW p. 12)

### Monster Behavior & Avoiding Monsters (UW p.12)

- Unintelligent monsters will automatically attack and/or pursue any characters they see.
- Intelligent monsters will make decisions based on the perceived strength of the party (see below).
- There is no chance of avoiding monsters if the monsters 1) have surprise and 2) are within 20 feet.
  - Exception: Unless the monsters have also been surprised.
- If characters flee, monsters will only continue to pursue in a straight line if there is not more than 90 feet between the parties involved.
- Monsters will only continue to pursue if a 1 or a 2 on a six-sided die roll is made in each of the following circumstances:
  - Turning a corner

- Passing through a door
- Going up or down stairs
- Monsters will only continue to pursue if a 1 is rolled on a six-sided die roll if characters pass through a secret door.
- Distance will open or close based on the relative movement rates of the parties involved.
- The following will also deter certain monsters from pursuit:
  - Burning oil will deter many monsters from pursuit.
  - Dropped edible items have a 10% chance of deterring intelligent monsters.
  - Dropped edible items have a 50% chance of deterring semi-intelligent monsters.
  - Dropped edible items have a 90% chance of deterring non-intelligent monsters.
  - Dropped treasure will have the opposite reaction as edible items (*e.g.*, dropped treasure will have a 90% chance of deterring intelligent monsters).

### Random Actions/Reactions of More Intelligent Monsters

- Besides the above pursuit situations, more intelligent monsters will act randomly according to the following results of a 2d6 roll:

<i>Result</i>	<i>Reaction</i>
2 – 5	Negative Reaction
6 – 8	Uncertain Reaction
9 – 12	Positive Reaction

- This reaction roll may be modified by the Referee for such things as bribes, fear, alignment of the parties, etc.