

THE TOURNAMENT OF MONSTERS



Dungeons & Dragons (D&D) is a game in which players create adventures with the help of a lead storyteller, called the Dungeon Master, who directs the gameplay. Dice determine if actions are successful, which adds chance and unpredictability.

No adventure is complete without challenges, and in D&D, monsters often present obstacles that players must overcome. Each monster has strengths and weaknesses, which are identified as pre-assigned ability scores from 1 to 20. The numbers give you an idea about how strong the monster is in that ability or trait. Each ability also has a numerical modifier (Mod). The modifiers range from negative numbers, which weaken the ability, to positive numbers, which strengthen it. Like the statistics or stats found in sports, a monster's ability scores and modifiers can help you figure out how well it will succeed at a task, so an understanding of logic, statistics, and probability factor into the game.

How are the numbers used? One way is to test innate talent and training. The Dungeon Master calls for an ability check when a character or monster attempts an action (not an attack) that has a chance of success or failure. Dice determine the results.

Read the descriptions and stats of three iconic D&D monsters. Use the list of abilities and abbreviations to identify each score.

ABILITIES

STR (strength): Physical strength, athletics

DEX (dexterity): Overall ability to control the body, acrobatics

CON (constitution): General overall health, physical capability

INT (intelligence): Academic knowledge, "book smarts"

WIS (wisdom): Practical knowledge, "street smarts"

CHA (charisma): Force of personality

Owlbear: An enormous creature with an owl-like face and covered with dark, thick feathers. It is vicious in nature, unpredictable, and has a sharp beak and deadly, steel-clawed paws.

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|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|-------------------|--------------------|-------------------|
| STR 20 (Mod +5) | DEX 12 (Mod +1) | CON 17 (Mod +3) | INT 3 (Mod -4) | WIS 12 (Mod +1) | CHA 7 (Mod -2) |
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Mind flayer: An alien-like species with four tentacles around its mouth that channel psychic powers and enable them to communicate telepathically with the creatures they try to control.

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| STR 11 (Mod +0) | DEX 12 (Mod +1) | CON 12 (Mod +1) | INT 19 (Mod +4) | WIS 17 (Mod +3) | CHA 17 (Mod +3) |
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Gelatinous cube: A ten-foot-tall transparent cube of mindless ooze that absorbs and dissolves everything in its path. It can change shape to flow through small spaces and can trap and engulf creatures who have no escape route.

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|--------------------|-------------------|--------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| STR 14 (Mod +2) | DEX 3 (Mod -4) | CON 20 (Mod +5) | INT 1 (Mod -5) | WIS 6 (Mod -2) | CHA 1 (Mod -5) |
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PART 1: A wizard is hosting a Tournament of Monsters! Adventurers such as yourself can choose to sponsor a monster. The monsters must complete three challenges as quickly as possible: First, they must push a giant boulder up a steep slope. Second, they must solve a tricky riddle to locate a hidden object. Third, they must tread lightly across a tightrope. Which monster would you choose to win the tournament based on their ability scores above? On the back of this sheet, explain your choice.

My predicted winner: _____

PART 2: Now, let's see which monster wins each task! Time for an ability check. Each task has been assigned a difficulty score. Roll a 20-sided die (d20) for each monster and add or subtract the modifier for the listed ability. Write your answers on the back of the sheet.

- 1. Push a giant boulder up a steep slope:** This is difficult, so the difficulty score is 15. Roll the d20 and add or subtract the STR/Strength modifier. If you reach 15 or higher, that monster wins!

Winner: _____

- 2. Solve a tricky riddle to locate a hidden object:** This is a medium-difficulty task, so the difficulty score is 10. Roll the d20 and add or subtract the INT/Intelligence modifier. 10 or higher and the monster succeeds.

Winner: _____

- 3. Walk a tightrope:** This is a short walk, so the difficulty score is 5. Roll the d20 and add or subtract the DEX/Dexterity modifier. 5 or higher wins!

Winner: _____

Which monster won each task? Did one monster win the tournament, or was it a tie? If it was a tie, then the monster who won the most difficult task won the tournament. The wizard is pleased with his champion and hires the monster to accompany you and your companions on your adventure. The other two monsters come along as well, because the more, the merrier!