

DUNGEONS & DRAGONS
START WITH A
MONSTER



Let's Begin!

A monster's **motives, its actions**, and the **consequences** of its behavior are all related to each other.

- When you *focus on one specific element at a time* (i.e., “vertical design”), you create a monster that’s **interesting**.
- When you consider the *connections between the three elements* (i.e., “horizontal design”), you create a monster that **makes sense**.

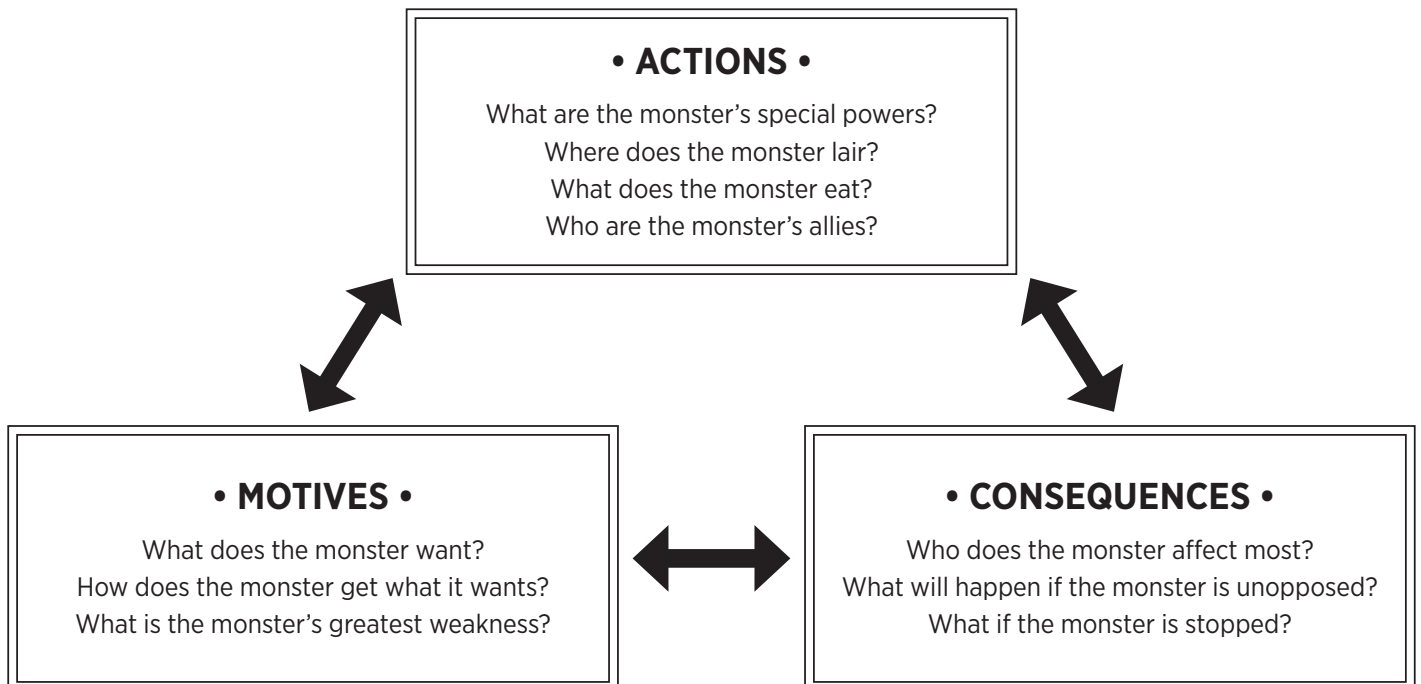
Great monsters are made by combining vertical and horizontal design.

Activity Plan

Let's design a monster together.

1. Brainstorm the monster's motives, actions, or consequences.
2. Use the questions on this page or the tables later in this handout to spark your imagination.
3. As you consider one part of your monster's design, you'll naturally get ideas for the other parts of this triangle.

The 3 Elements of Monster Design



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Tables of Inspiration

Monster Types

Your adversary can be any one of these creature types.

Type	Description
Aberrations	Alien beings with innate magical abilities drawn from the creature's alien mind
Beasts	Nonhumanoid creatures that are part of fantasy ecology (ordinary animals dinosaurs, etc.)
Celestials	Good by nature, many are servants of deities
Constructs	Creatures that are made, not born (i.e.: golems)
Dragons	Large reptilian creatures of ancient origin and tremendous power. Both good and evil types
Elementals	Beings born of the elements or infused with elemental energies (elementals or genies)
Fey	Magical creatures tied to the forces of nature
Fiends	Wicked creatures like demons and devils
Giants	Humanlike, monstrous beings
Humanoids	Main people of the D&D world
Monstrosities	Unnatural creatures made from magical experimentations gone awry or curses
Oozes	Gelatinous creatures that rarely have a fixed shape
Plants	Inordinary flora
Undead	Once-living creatures existing in a state of undeath

Adventure Villains

Whatever their nature, antagonists should have goals that the heroes can uncover and thwart.

d20	Villain
1	Beast or monstrosity with no particular agenda
2	Aberration bent on corruption or domination
3	Fiend bent on corruption or destruction
4	Dragon bent on domination and plunder
5	Giant bent on plunder
6-7	Undead with any agenda
8	Fey with a mysterious goal
9-10	Humanoid cultist
11-12	Humanoid conqueror
13	Humanoid seeking revenge
14-15	Humanoid schemer seeking to rule
16	Humanoid criminal mastermind
17-18	Humanoid raider or ravager
19	Humanoid under a curse
20	Misguided humanoid zealot

Villain's Weakness

A smart villain tries to conceal its weakness.

d8	Weakness
1	A hidden object holds the villain's soul.
2	The villain's power is broken if the death of its true love is avenged.
3	The villain is weakened in the presence of a particular artifact.
4	A special weapon deals extra damage when used against the villain.
5	The villain is destroyed if it speaks its true name.
6	An ancient prophecy or riddle reveals how the villain can be overthrown.
7	The villain falls when an ancient enemy forgives its past actions.
8	The villain loses its power if a mystic bargain it struck long ago is completed.

Dungeon Goals

Common goals that drive or lure adventurers into dungeons.

d20	Goal
1	Stop the dungeon's monstrous inhabitants from raiding the surface world.
2	Foil a villain's evil scheme.
3	Destroy a magical threat inside the dungeon.
4	Acquire treasure.
5	Find a particular item for a specific purpose.
6	Retrieve a stolen item hidden in the dungeon.
7	Find information needed for a special purpose.
8	Rescue a captive.
9	Discover the fate of a previous adventuring party.
10	Find an NPC who disappeared in the area.
11	Slay a dragon or some other challenging monster.
12	Discover the nature and origin of a strange location or phenomenon.
13	Pursue fleeing foes taking refuge in the dungeon.
14	Escape from captivity in the dungeon.
15	Clear a ruin so it can be rebuilt and reoccupied.
16	Discover why a villain is interested in the dungeon.
17	Win a bet or complete a rite of passage by surviving in the dungeon for a certain amount of time.
18	Parley with a villain in the dungeon.
19	Hide from a threat outside the dungeon.
20	Roll twice, ignoring results of 20.

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DESCRIPTION

ECOSYSTEM

NAME

UNIQUE TRAITS/ABILITIES

ADVENTURE

ORIGIN



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ECOSYSTEM

- Builds dens made out of bamboo cuttings.
- Lives a solitary life.
- Diet is strictly fish and bamboo shoots.
- Will make brief alliances with songbirds to act as spies.



DESCRIPTION

- Two large bat ears.
- Retractable talons that can spray poison.
- A tail so small it is almost unnoticeable.

NAME

Bambusa Budgie

UNIQUE TRAITS/ABILITIES

- Immune to poison.
- Able to fly silently and surprise their prey.
- Has a cry that sounds like wind.

ADVENTURE

- Save a missing dog that has gone into the bamboo maze.
- Bamboo maze provides many places for traps and surprise attacks.
- If the party succeeds, they find a Ring of Feather Falling, three unhatched bambusa budgie eggs and 5 GP from the dog's owner.

TWIST

- The bambusa budgie has in fact, been feeding the neglected dog in the maze.
- The party can either take the dog by force, causing the bambusa budgie to attack, or attempt to coax both creatures out of the maze.