

HOW TO RUN A
DUEL



BY LUCA PIANCASTELLI

RUNNING A DUEL

"There is nothing like when the crowd skips a breath. It happens when one of two opponents hits the ground... and it's then, either standing or fallen, when you find out what you're made of."

— Nalla "Bloodletter" Ogolakanu

Memories of a Gladiator of Colossus

This is a set of rules that will help you make a duel encounter more interesting and dynamic for your players.

REASONS TO USE THIS

The main reasons to use these rules are:

- ♦ Make the gameplay feel as epic as the duel itself.
- ♦ Diversify the actions your characters can perform in combat.
- ♦ Make the arena you are playing in a character too.

GAMEPLAY

Rolling initiative. Use Speed Factor Initiative from the DMG page 271. Roll initiative every round, adding the modifier for the action the creature will do.

Simplify the math. Calculate what you need to roll on the dice by subtracting the to hit bonus from the AC and write that down. Remember to do this for other weapons and spells if this applies.

Resistances. Asa

ACTION DIVERSITY

Bonus Actions. Make drinking a potion, shove, grapple, break grapple and search bonus actions.

Takedown Action. you can use the Attack action when you're grappling a creature to attempt to prone them. If you're able to make multiple attacks with the Attack action, this attack replaces one of them.

You make a Strength (Athletics) check contested by the targets' Strength (Athletics) or Dexterity (Acrobatics) check. If you succeed, you subject the target to the prone condition.

Make fights more brutal. Either use the Lingering Injuries & Massive Damage rules from the DMG on pages 272 and 273.

Or, when you hit an attack you can burn your bonus action to inflict an injury that will last for the duration mentioned on the description or until the end of the duel. The injury can be chosen from the list below based on the damage a single attack does compared to the creature's HP.

First Tier (1/10 of the creatures HP)

Blind - Creature is blinded for 1 turn.

Hurt Leg - Creatures' speed if halved for one turn.

Bleed - Creature takes half of this attack's damage on the next turn.

Second Tier (1/5 of the creatures HP)

Hit in the head - On the beginning of the next turn, the creature must succeed on DC 10 Constitution saving throw or be stunned for that turn. If they succeed this isn't crossed from the list.

Takedown - You automatically knock the creature prone.

Hurt a Leg - Creatures' speed if halved for one turn.

Third Tier (1/3 of the creatures HP)

Broken Leg - Creature's speed if halved for the duration of the duel.

Broken Arm - You heavily injure a creature's arm, and it can't be used for the duration of the fight.

Horrible Wound - The creature is disfigured by a wound that can't be easily concealed. For this duel, they have disadvantage on checks to Impress the Crowd.

After each effect is used by one player, it is crossed off from both players' list of choices.

ARENA PERSONALITY

Each arena should be different to the next, so we will give it a set DC for everything you have to do there. This will be used for most things be it impressing the crowd or escaping traps. Make this between 10 and 20 based on how hard you feel it should be. Also, each arena will have a cheer dice, based on the dice from the bardic inspiration ability.

Arena DC		
Easy	Medium	Hard
10	15	20

Cheer Dice			
1d6	1d8	1d10	1d12
Lower impact		Higher Impact	

Impressing the crowd. This can be done by spending a reaction when avoiding attacks using the dodge action and when criting.

When you do this, roll a Charisma or Strength (Performance) check against the arena DC. If you succeed, you receive one cheer dice that can be added to one ability check, attack roll, or saving throw you make during the duel.

TRAPS

The DC to escape them is the arena DC, but you can also expend one cheer dice to automatically succeed. Here are some example traps:

Spike trap. This is a set of mechanical spikes that are hidden under the arena's sand. They can be spotted by a Wisdom (Perception) check against the arena DC.

The trap is triggered when a small or larger creature steps on it, when triggered a creature that is standing on it must succeed a Dexterity saving throw against the arena DC or suffer 11(2d10) piercing damage and have their speed halved for 1 turn.

Spiked Pillar. This is a set of spinning blades that spins around a pillar.

If a creature starts their turn 5 ft from this pillar, they must succeed a Dexterity saving throw or take 7(2d6) slashing damage.

Animal Cage. Caged animals are kept in the arena.

If a creature is within 5ft of the cage, the trapped creature can make a melee attack against that creature.

If you'd like to do something different, check out the Improvised Damage & Damage Severity and Level rules in the DMG page 249.

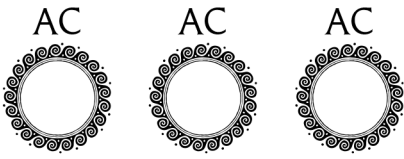
MORALE RULES

This is a new winning condition for your duels. With it, there are three saves you have to make throughout the duel, if you fail all three, you lose.

The first two are charisma saving throws, you make them whenever your opponent gets cheer dice. They are against the arena DC. If you fail the first, your opponent can now use their cheer dice to lower one ability check, attack roll, or saving throw you make during the duel. If you fail the second, you're now open to make the final check when you reach that condition!

The final check is done when you are down to half your life, it's a constitution saving throw against the arena DC. If you succeed, you have to keep making saves every time you take damage. This is your character clinging to their will to fight. If you fail this save, you lose the duel.





HP



INITIATIVE



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Factor	Initiative Modifiers
Spellcasting	- (spell's level)
Melee, heavy weapon	-2
Melee, light or finesse weapon	+2
Melee, two-handed weapon	-2
Ranged, loading weapon	-5

Creature Size	Initiative Modifier
Tiny	+5
Small	+2
Medium	+0
Large	-2
Huge	-5
Gargantuan	-8

ARENA DC

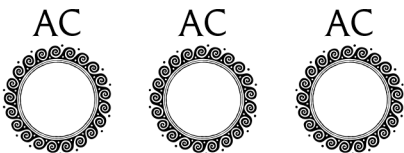


MORALE



Morale
(1/2 HP)
Tier 1
(1/10 HP)
Tier 2
(1/5 HP)
Tier 3
(1/3 HP)

CHEER DICE



HP



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CHEER DICE

