

Battlefield Actions Additional Combat Rules

Why Use Battlefield Actions:

Battlefield Actions strive to make combat encounters feel diverse, dynamic, and grand. They shift the players' objective from "deal the most damage to the monster" to a completely different goal, keeping fights more interesting and ever-changing to play and making enemies feel more threatening, more of a "boss" encounter.

You should use Battlefield Actions if:

- You and your players are well versed in the normal combat mechanics and are ready to add a new mechanic.
- You find fights skew towards static encounters where movement plays a very small role in combat, and most turns can be summarized as a race to inflict damage and little else.
- You are having a hard time challenging your players.
- You or your players have expressed boredom when it comes to fights, finding them too slow, repetitive, or samey.
- You are looking for a way to make a "boss fight" feel more climactic than other battles.

How Battlefield Actions Work:

Battlefield actions consist of two phases:

- A Tell, where the Battlefield Action starts. The Tell does not inflict any damage. Instead, it is a hint for the player as to what the Battlefield Action will do once it's resolved and how to stop it.
- A Resolution, when the Battlefield Action ends. If the players have not neutralized or mitigated the Battlefield Action, the actual effect of this action will resolve in this phase.
- All Battlefield Actions can be either neutralized or mitigated. The point of the Tell phase is for the players to figure out how to neutralize or mitigate the action before it reaches the Resolution stage. If the players don't manage to neutralize or mitigate a Battlefield Action, the Battlefield Action simply triggers.

In combat, Battlefield Actions start their Tell phase at the end of a monster's turn and arrive at their Resolution stage at the beginning of that monster's next turn. The players have the whole Initiative order to deal with the Battlefield Action.

For example:

At the end of the enemy's turn, they conjure two summoning circles on either side of the battlefield. The circles glow brightly with magical energy, and motes of this arcane light coalesce to form the outline of another creature. If a player steps close to them, they dim somewhat. This is the Tell phase of this Battlefield Action.

At least one creature must step on the circles to stop the summoning. When they stand on them, the circles dim and stop gathering energy.

At the beginning of the monster's next turn, if no creature is standing on the summoning circles, two minions are summoned to assist the boss. If a creature is standing on each circle, the Battlefield Action has been neutralized and fails. This is the Resolution phase of this Battlefield Action.

To summarize:

1. The end of the monster's turn starts the Tell phase of the Battlefield Action.
2. Players must figure out a way to neutralize or mitigate the action before the monster's next turn starts.
3. The beginning of the monster's next turn starts the Resolution phase of the Battlefield Action.

Depending on the player's action, the Battlefield Action triggers, is mitigated, or is neutralized.

We recommend giving your monster at least two Battlefield Actions so that the Battlefield Action changes each round.

Battlefield Actions have not been designed to be given to anything other than "boss" enemies. Likewise, Battlefield Actions are not supposed to be given to two different monsters in the same combat encounter.

Damage By CR and Saving Throws:

Since many Battlefield Actions deal damage, and this system is intended for you to attach to existing monsters or new ones you make, the damage a Battlefield Action deals depends on the monster's CR.

COMING SOON - as a quick fix: choose the strongest attack from the monster and make the battlefield action deal that damage.

If a Battlefield Action calls for the players to make a saving throw, choose what ability that monster is using to perform the Battlefield Action and follow the regular DC calculation formula:

$8 + \text{key ability modifier} + \text{Proficiency Bonus}$

Proficiency Bonuses can be found next to CR in all monster stat blocks and are dependent on a monster's CR.

Battlefield Actions

Here you'll find a list of some Battlefield Actions that you can use. Because the damage dealt and the DCs involved in this Battlefield Actions depend on the monster's abilities and CR, any of these Battlefield Actions can work for any monster.

You can therefore concentrate on how you want a monster's actions to feel, and the effects you want that monster to create on the battlefield, rather than whether or not the damage or difficulty feels correct for the fight at hand.

Quite a few Battlefield Actions are resolved by breaking a boss' concentration. The point of Battlefield Actions isn't to stop your players from dealing damage, but to shift their focus away from only doing that while remaining static for the entire fight. We recommend mixing Battlefield Actions that force players to move, hold their actions, or otherwise not attack as they normally would with Battlefield Actions that must be neutralized or minimized by breaking Concentration. Too many of the former might make Battlefield Actions feel like an obstacle to the players' fun rather than a mechanic to make battles grander and more dynamic.

Unless otherwise specified, the damage type of a Battlefield Action is up to the GM and dependent upon the monster. A giant holding a metal club will deal Bludgeoning damage when performing the Cleave Battlefield Action, whereas a fiend performing the same action with a flaming whip will deal Fire damage. Use damage types to make Battlefield Actions feel unique to the monster using them.

Every Battlefield Action is presented in the same format: first the Tell, then the condition to mitigate or neutralize, and then the Resolution.

For ease of reading, the creature performing the Battlefield Action will be referred to as "the boss."

Summoning Minions:

Tell: Two 10-foot-radius summoning circles appear on the battlefield as the faint outline of a monster starts to coalesce within them.

Neutralization: If a creature steps on the circles, the minion cannot be summoned.

Resolution: If not neutralized, two minions are summoned to the battlefield to assist the boss.

Cleave:

Tell: The boss raises its weapon, readying a devastating attack against anyone in front of it.

Whenever a creature deals damage to the boss, the boss faces in the direction of the creature that attacked it, changing the area affected by their Cleave.

Mitigation: The players might choose to have a particularly hardy character hold their attack until right before the boss' turn to make sure the boss hits them, or have a ranged combatant hit the boss last while all other characters move away from the Cleave's area of effect. They might also

have a rogue character hit, disengage, and run away from the boss, allowing the boss to target the rogue while they remain out of the area of effect

Resolution: If not mitigated, the boss Cleaves a 15-foot Cone area in the direction the boss is facing. Every creature in that area must make a Dexterity saving throw, taking full damage on a failure and half damage on a success.

Ray:

Tell: The boss begins to coalesce all magic around it into a ball of energy on its palm. Whenever a creature deals damage to the boss, the boss faces in the direction of the creature that attacked it, changing the area that will be affected by the ray.

Mitigation: A particularly hardy character can hold their attack until right before the boss' turn to make sure the boss hits them. Players must also be aware of their positioning so as not to be caught in the area of effect of the ray.

Resolution: If not mitigated, the boss releases a 5-foot-wide, 60-foot-long ray in the direction the boss is facing. Every creature in that path must make a Dexterity saving throw, taking full damage on a failure and half damage on a success.

Enchanting Ballad:

Tell: The boss enters a state of deep concentration and starts to sing a haunting melody. As more and more of the song reaches the ears of creatures who can hear it, they drift away from themselves, developing a slowly growing sense of understanding and camaraderie with the boss.

Neutralization: The players must break the boss' Concentration on the song as one would break Concentration on a spell. Alternatively, the players can use the spell Silence to ensure the boss cannot sing its melody.

Resolution: If not mitigated, the creature with the lowest Wisdom ability score that can hear the song has the Charmed condition until the song ends and repeats the save at the end of each of its turns.

Watchful Eye:

Tell: The boss opens their eyes, and a dreadful magical energy gathers like a pinprick of light deep inside of their pupil. When their gaze falls on a creature, it feels an impending sense of dread grow within itself.

Neutralization: The players must hide from the boss so as to not be seen when the Battlefield Action reaches its Resolution phase. They can use the environment to block line of sight, take the Hide action, or even cast spells like Darkness to obscure the boss' vision.

Resolution: If not neutralized, all creatures the boss can see have the Frightened condition. They can make a Wisdom saving throw to free themselves from this effect at the end of each of their turns.

Perfect Illusion:

Tell: The boss creates three illusory copies of itself on the battlefield. These illusory copies start to gather magical energy on their palms, getting ready to unleash an attack.

Neutralization: The illusory copies share the same ability scores and AC as the boss, but only have 1 Hit Point. The players must deal damage to these illusory copies to destroy them before the boss' next turn.

Resolution: If not neutralized, each illusory copy will make an attack against a creature. The attack is one that the boss has as part of its stat block rather than being one based on the damage stated in the Battlefield Actions rules.

Tactical Retreat:

Tell: The boss starts to concentrate on a spell as its form slowly starts to dematerialize in front of the party's very eyes.

Neutralization: The players must break the boss' Concentration as one would break Concentration on a spell.

Resolution: If not neutralized, the boss is teleported away to a location of its choice, escaping the battle to live another day.

Danse Macabre:

Tell: The boss begins to perform an enchanting dance. As the party watches its enchanting movements, they feel an increasing urge to join them.

Neutralization: The players must break the boss' Concentration on the dance as one would break Concentration on a spell. Alternatively, the players can find a way to bring the boss' speed to 0, such as by restraining it.

Resolution: If not neutralized, all creatures hostile to the boss are under the effects of the spell Irresistible Dance until the end of their next turn.

Eruption:

Tell: The boss punches the ground with all its might, and cracks begin to snake outwards from the impact. Energy shines through these cracks, brightest and strongest at the epicenter of the impact, and begins growing in power. The closer a creature stands to the impact, the stronger this energy seems to be, and the more the ground cracks and trembles.

Mitigation: The players must move as far as possible from the impact to reduce the damage taken when the battlefield finally erupts.

Resolution: The ground erupts, consuming the battlefield in a blast of energy, its effects more or less lethal depending on how close a creature is to the impact. Creatures standing less than 20 feet away from the impact must make a Dexterity saving throw, taking full damage on a failure and half damage on a success. Creatures standing 25 feet or more away from the impact must make a Dexterity saving throw, taking half damage on a failure and no damage on a success.

Eye of the Hurricane:

Tell: The boss begins to generate a massive wind current in a vortex centered on itself. The wind picks up with surprising speed, and soon the characters feel themselves losing their footing—being

pushed not only outwards, but upwards. The only zone where the wind doesn't seem to grow in strength is directly next to the boss, at the center of this vortex.

Mitigation: The players must move as close as possible to the boss to reduce the damage taken when the vortex finally coalesces into a hurricane.

Resolution: The vortex turns into a hurricane, sweeping the battlefield in a deadly whirlwind. Its effects are more or less lethal, depending on how far away a creature is from the boss. Creatures standing more than 10 feet away from the boss must make a Dexterity saving throw, taking full damage and being pushed 30 feet away from the boss on a failure and taking half damage and being pushed 15 feet away from the boss on a success. Creatures standing 10 feet or less away from the boss must make a Dexterity saving throw, taking half damage and being pushed 15 feet away from the boss on a failure, and taking no damage on a success.

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