

Also, characters and monsters with distinctive voices are memorable. If you're not a natural mimic or actor, borrowing distinctive speech patterns from real life, the movies, or television is a good place to start. Practice different voices and impersonations of famous people, then use those voices to bring your NPCs to life.

Experiment with different speech patterns. For instance, a barmaid and a city magistrate probably use their words differently. Similarly, peasants could speak in earthy dialects, while rich folk talk in haughty drawls. Let a pirate NPC say, "Arrrr, maties!" in your best Long John Silver voice. Let intelligent monsters unfamiliar with Common stumble along with awkward grammar. Let drunkards and monsters mutter with slurred speech, while lizardfolk hiss their threats.

In any interaction with multiple NPCs, make sure the adventurers remain the focus. Have the NPCs talk to them, not so much to each other. If possible, let one NPC do most of the talking, but if multiple NPCs need to talk, give them distinct voices so the players know who's who.

USING YOUR FACE AND ARMS

Use your facial expressions to help show a character's emotions. Scowl, smile, grin, snarl, pout, cross your eyes—do whatever it takes to make the character or monster memorable to the players. When you combine facial expressions with an unusual voice, a character truly comes to life.

Though you don't need to stand up out of your chair, you can use your arms to bring even more life to an NPC. A noble could chop the air with one hand while speaking in a deadpan monotone, while an archmage might express her displeasure by silently rolling her eyes and massaging her temples with her fingers.

ENGAGING THE PLAYERS

Some players enjoy roleplaying and interaction more than others. Whatever your players' tastes, your lively portrayal of NPCs and monsters can inspire players to make just as much investment in portraying their characters. This makes social interactions an opportunity for everyone to become more immersed in the game, creating a story whose protagonists have depth.

To make sure everyone has something to do during a roleplaying-heavy game session, consider one or more of the following approaches.

Appeal to Player Preferences. There are in-game activities that players enjoy more than others, as discussed in this book's introduction. Players who like acting thrive in interaction situations, and it's fine to let those players take the spotlight. They often inspire other players by their example, but make sure those other players have an opportunity to join in the fun.

Players who like exploring and storytelling are usually amenable to roleplaying, as long as it moves the campaign forward and reveals more about the world. Players who like problem-solving often enjoy figuring out the right thing to say to shift an NPC's attitude. Players who are instigators like provoking reactions from NPCs, so they're often easily engaged—though not always productively.

Players who like to optimize their characters and slay monsters also like to argue, and having conflict within an interaction can help those players embrace roleplaying. Still, creating combat connections to an extended interaction (such as a corrupt vizier sending assassins to kill the adventurers) is often the best way to keep action-focused players engaged.

Target Specific Characters. Create situations where characters who might not otherwise be engaged with a social interaction have to do at least some of the talking. Perhaps the NPC in question is a family member or a contact of a particular adventurer and talks only to that character. An NPC of a certain race or class might listen only to characters he or she feels a kinship with. Creating a sense of importance can be a great way to get specific players engaged, but don't shut out players who are already roleplaying.

If a couple of players are dominating the conversation, take a moment now and then to involve the others. You can do this in character if you like: "And what about your hulking friend? Speak, barbarian! What will you pledge in exchange for my favor?" Or just ask the player what his or her character is doing while the conversation is going on. The first approach is better for players who are already comfortable speaking in their characters' voices. The second approach works better for players who need encouragement to engage in a roleplaying scenario.

OBJECTS

When characters need to saw through ropes, shatter a window, or smash a vampire's coffin, the only hard and fast rule is this: given enough time and the right tools, characters can destroy any destructible object. Use common sense when determining a character's success at damaging an object. Can a fighter cut through a section of a stone wall with a sword? No, the sword is likely to break before the wall does.

For the purpose of these rules, an object is a discrete, inanimate item like a window, door, sword, book, table, chair, or stone, not a building or a vehicle that is composed of many other objects.

STATISTICS FOR OBJECTS

When time is a factor, you can assign an Armor Class and hit points to a destructible object. You can also give it immunities, resistances, and vulnerabilities to specific types of damage.

Armor Class. An object's Armor Class is a measure of how difficult it is to deal damage to the object when striking it (because the object has no chance of dodging out of the way). The Object Armor Class table provides suggested AC values for various substances.

OBJECT ARMOR CLASS

Substance	AC	Substance	AC
Cloth, paper, rope	11	Iron, steel	19
Crystal, glass, ice	13	Mithral	21
Wood, bone	15	Adamantine	23
Stone	17		

Hit Points. An object's hit points measure how much damage it can take before losing its structural integrity. Resilient objects have more hit points than fragile ones. Large objects also tend to have more hit points than small ones, unless breaking a small part of the object is just as effective as breaking the whole thing. The Object Hit Points table provides suggested hit points for fragile and resilient objects that are Large or smaller.

OBJECT HIT POINTS

Size	Fragile	Resilient
Tiny (bottle, lock)	2 (1d4)	5 (2d4)
Small (chest, lute)	3 (1d6)	10 (3d6)
Medium (barrel, chandelier)	4 (1d8)	18 (4d8)
Large (cart, 10-ft.-by-10-ft. window)	5 (1d10)	27 (5d10)

Huge and Gargantuan Objects. Normal weapons are of little use against many Huge and Gargantuan objects, such as a colossal statue, towering column of stone, or massive boulder. That said, one torch can burn a Huge tapestry, and an *earthquake* spell can reduce a colossus to rubble. You can track a Huge or Gargantuan object's hit points if you like, or you can simply decide how long the object can withstand whatever weapon or force is acting against it. If you track hit points for the object, divide it into Large or smaller sections, and track each section's hit points separately. Destroying one of those sections could ruin the entire object. For example, a Gargantuan statue of a human might topple over when one of its Large legs is reduced to 0 hit points.

Objects and Damage Types. Objects are immune to poison and psychic damage. You might decide that some damage types are more effective against a particular object or substance than others. For example, bludgeoning damage works well for smashing things but not for cutting through rope or leather. Paper or cloth objects might be vulnerable to fire and lightning damage. A pick can chip away stone but can't effectively cut down a tree. As always, use your best judgment.

Damage Threshold. Big objects such as castle walls often have extra resilience represented by a damage threshold. An object with a damage threshold has immunity to all damage unless it takes an amount of damage from a single attack or effect equal to or greater than its damage threshold, in which case it takes damage as normal. Any damage that fails to meet or exceed the object's damage threshold is considered superficial and doesn't reduce the object's hit points.

COMBAT

This section builds on the combat rules in the *Player's Handbook* and offers tips for keeping the game running smoothly when a fight breaks out.

TRACKING INITIATIVE

You can use several different methods for keeping track of who goes when in combat.

HIDDEN LIST

Many DMs keep track of initiative on a list the players can't see: usually a piece of paper behind a DM screen

or a spreadsheet on a tablet computer. This method allows you to keep track of combatants who haven't been revealed yet, and you can use the initiative list as a place to record the current hit points of monsters, as well as other useful notes.

A downside of this approach is that you have to remind the players round after round when their turns come up.

VISIBLE LIST

You can use a whiteboard to track initiative. As the players tell you their initiative numbers, write them on the whiteboard in order from highest to lowest, leaving space between each name. Either write the monsters' initiatives on the list at the same time or add them to the list on each monster's first turn.

As a further improvement, use magnets that you can attach to a metal-based whiteboard with characters' and monsters' names written on them, or write those names on cards held in place by magnets.

A visible list lets everyone see the order of play. Players know when their turns are coming up, and they can start planning their actions in advance. A visible list also removes any uncertainty about when the monsters will act in the fight.

A variation on the visible list is to give one player responsibility for keeping track of initiative, either on a whiteboard or on a piece of paper the other players can see. This method reduces the number of things you need to keep track of yourself.

INDEX CARDS

In this approach, each character gets an index card, as does each group of identical monsters. When the players tell you their initiative numbers, write the numbers on their characters' index cards. Do the same when you roll the monsters' initiative. Then arrange the cards in order from highest to lowest. Starting at the top, you move down through the stack. When you call out the name of the character whose turn it is, also mention who's next, prompting that player to start thinking ahead. After each character or group of monsters acts, the top card is moved to the bottom of the stack.

At first, players don't know the order of play when you use combat cards, and they don't know where the monsters fall into the order until the monsters act.

TRACKING MONSTER HIT POINTS

During a combat encounter, you need to track how much damage each monster takes. Most DMs track damage in secret so that their players don't know how many hit points a monster has remaining. Whether you choose to be secretive or not is up to you. What's important is that every monster's hit points be tracked individually.

Tracking damage for one or two monsters isn't onerous, but it helps to have a system for larger groups of monsters. If you aren't using miniatures or other visual aids, the easiest way to keep track of your monsters is to assign them unique features. Descriptions such as "the ogre with the nasty scar" and "the ogre with the horned helm" help you and your players track which monster is which. For example, imagine that you're running an encounter with three