

AX&X: COMBAT & TACTICS

Positioning, maneuvers, and ground. A combat supplement for AX&X.

FIGHTING ON THE GROUND

The core game runs a fight on four lines: initiative, an action, an attack roll, and damage. That is enough for a torchlit room and a handful of goblins, and most tables never need more. This supplement is for the fights where the ground itself matters: a bridge, a cliff edge, a flooded crypt, a cavalry charge down a hall.

It adds options, not new dice. Every rule here is still **1d20 + a flat modifier** against AC, or a save at 12+. Use what the scene calls for and leave the rest on the shelf. A GM can take the terrain lines and skip the wrestling, or the reverse.

POSITION

- **Range Without a Map:** For theater-of-the-mind play, track three bands, not feet: **engaged** (in reach), **near** (a move off, about 30 ft), and **far** (a Run or a bowshot away). A move shifts one band, reaching engaged lets you strike, and leaving engaged draws the free attack unless you Withdraw. Missiles carry to far at the core's range steps.
- **Difficult Ground:** Rubble, mud, deep snow, thick brush, a steep slope, or shallow water. Moving through it costs double, so 30 ft becomes 15. You cannot charge or run across it.
- **High Ground:** An attacker above the target, on a ledge, a stair, or a saddle, strikes at +1, and holds reach against anyone climbing up.
- **Prone:** Knocked flat by a shove, a trip, a charge, or a fall. A prone creature attacks at -2, is hit in melee at +2, and is a poor target at range, -2 to shoot. Standing up spends half your move.
- **Climbing & Squeezing:** Climbing is half move and needs a free hand: a Thief uses the Class Check on a hard pitch, others a STR check. Fighting as you climb is -2, and a hit may force a DEX save or a fall. A tight gap is difficult ground and gives no room for a shield.

CHARGING & BRACING

- **Charge:** Move at least 20 ft in a straight line at a foe, then make one melee attack at +2. You are committed: -2 to your own AC until your next turn. Difficult ground or a turn in the path cancels it.
- **Set Against a Charge:** Ready a spear, pike, or polearm and name the way you face. The first charger or large creature to reach you is struck first and takes double damage. This is why a braced line beats cavalry.
- **Shove & Trip:** In place of an attack, make a STR check against a foe's STR, or its HD for a monster. Win, and push it back 5 ft or drop it Prone. A creature two sizes larger cannot be moved this way.

TACTICAL ACTIONS

Each replaces your action for the round.

- **Guard:** Take no action now. Name a trigger, a foe rounding the corner, the door bursting, an ally's signal, and act the instant it happens, before the trigger resolves. A readied shot or spell goes off first.
- **Parry:** Forgo your attack and raise your guard: +2 AC until your next turn. A Fighter may instead name one foe and cut its attacks by 2.

- **Gang Up:** Two or more on one target already give +2 each in the core. Strike an occupied or unaware foe from behind for another +2, and ignore its shield.

GRAPPLING

For grabs, tackles, and bare hands, when a blade is the wrong tool.

- **Unarmed:** A punch or kick deals **1d2 + STR**, and a foe dropped by it is knocked out, not slain. A held weapon still beats fists.
- **Grab:** In place of an attack, make a STR check against the target's STR or HD. Hold it and neither of you moves, and both of you attack others at -2. Break free with a STR check on your action.
- **Overbear:** Pile on to drag a foe Prone. Each extra grabber adds +2. A pinned creature is Helpless to those holding it.

RANGED COMBAT

- **Point Blank:** Within 10 ft, a clear shot hits at +1. A sling or thrown weapon serves here. A bow does not: with a foe in melee you shoot at -4 and draw a free attack, so drop it for a blade.
- **Into the Scrum:** Shooting a target locked in melee with your friends is -4 to pick it out. A natural 1 or 2 hits a random fighter in that knot instead, friend or foe.
- **Cover:** Something solid in the way: a low wall, a corner, a pillar. Half cover is -2 to hit; full cover, no shot. It shields you from a foe's arrows the same way.
- **Concealment:** Smoke, fog, foliage, or gloom hides a target without stopping an arrow. Lightly hidden is -2, heavily hidden -4, and a target you cannot see at all takes no aimed shot or targeted spell.

LIGHT & WEATHER

- **Darkness:** As the core: swinging at what you cannot see is -4, and targeted spells need line of sight. A torch or lantern lights 30 ft; Dwarf, Elf, and Half-Orc see 60 ft in the dark.
- **Dim Light:** Dusk, a distant torch, or deep shade. -2 to attacks and to spot, and the edges of the room count as concealment.
- **Smoke & Fog:** Concealment that drifts, and it fouls the lungs. A round spent in thick smoke calls for a Body save or a cough that costs -2 that turn. Fire and lightning cut through; little else does.
- **Wind & Rain:** Hard wind sends arrows wide, -2 past 60 ft, and a gale grounds light flyers. Rain turns ground difficult and footing poor.

FOOTING

- **Slick Ground:** Ice, mud, blood, or loose scree. Run or get shoved on it and make a DEX save, 12+, or fall Prone. Careful movement is safe but counts as difficult ground.
- **Edges & Drops:** Near a pit, a rampart, or a ship's rail. A failed save from a shove, a trip, or a slip sends you over. A short fall is 1d6 per 10 ft; a long one is a roll on Brush with Death.
- **Fighting in Water:** Wading is difficult ground; swimming is half move and no shield. Submerged, melee is -2, a thrust beats a swing, and a

bow will not fire. Hold your breath a number of rounds equal to your CON score, then make a Body save each round or start to drown.

OPTIONAL: HEROES OF THE LINE

Martial skill shows in volume, not only in bigger numbers. The extra attacks are already core; cleave is the optional flourish.

- **Extra Attack:** A core **Warrior**, **Fighter**, **Barbarian**, or **Ranger**, makes a second attack at Level 6 and a third at 11, each a full roll at the same Attack Mod.
- **Cleave:** When a Warrior's melee attack drops a foe, the swing carries into another within reach, once per turn.

1D8 BATTLEFIELD FEATURES

Roll one or two to give a fight its shape. Each is a prize for both sides.

1 Choke Point: A door, bridge, or ledge only one or two can hold.

Flanking is denied, and a braced line rules.

2 High Ground: A stair, balcony, or rise. +1 to strike from it, and a scramble to take it.

3 Broken Ground: Rubble and pits across the middle. Difficult ground, and no charge through it.

4 Scattered Cover: Pillars, crates, gravestones. Half cover for whoever reaches it first.

5 The Drop: A pit, cliff, or rail along one side. Shoves and trips turn deadly here.

6 Darkness: Guttered torches or a deep cave. -4 to those without darkvision, and a lamp becomes a prize.

7 Hazard: Fire, a flood, a swarm, a swinging blade. 1d6 to anyone forced into it.

8 Slick Footing: Ice, mud, or spreading blood. A DEX save to run or be shoved, or fall Prone.