

# Griff's Super Simple Dungeon Encounter Reactions

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For a more extensive explanation please review the related video "Super Simple NPC Reactions for Dungeons & Dragons" on The Informal Game Youtube channel at <https://www.youtube.com/@TheInformalGame>.

The process I use is very simple. Although it has been modified from the original, this variant is similar to what is found in the old game. It can also be plugged into any existing game system if you desire a more streamlined method for your ongoing campaign setting.

This is to be used during most NPC encounters, and especially useful for wandering monsters. Of course, some creatures are just mindless underworld horrors and will always attack.

## Process

When encountering an NPC, or Monster, you will need to do four things (described in more detail below).

1. Determine Surprise Advantage and Roll for Surprise
2. Roll for Encounter Distance
3. Roll for Reaction
4. Apply Reaction Modifiers

## 1. Determine Surprise Advantage and Roll for Surprise

Surprise only happens if there is no chance of being spotted by the other side beforehand. In a dungeon a party of adventurers will have torches or some other form of illumination. This will negate their chance of gaining surprise unless they are coming through a closed door or their light is obscured through some other means.

Feral creatures are very alert and often can hear the smallest sounds or the faintest smells of potential enemies. Consider that they still get a chance surprise die roll regardless of the encounter conditions.

The sides which can gain surprise roll a single d6. Surprise occurs on a 1-2. Gaining the advantage of surprise results in one free round of move, attack, and/or spells. Undetected retreat may also be possible. If both sides in an encounter are surprised, neither side is granted a free round of actions. The only change is the range at which the encounter occurs, see Encounter Distance (below).

It should be noted that a party of adventurers will be detected by monsters on a 1-2, thus it is best to have a single character ahead of the party without a light source, who is scouting for enemies and listening at doors.

## 2. Roll for Encounter Distance

Surprise results in an encounter occurring at a close range of 20 to 80 feet. (two d4 x 10)

If neither side is surprised the starting range will be 20 to 120 feet. (two d6 x 10)

These distances are for use in underworld adventures. Consult your rules for encounter distance in the wilderness. A city encounter would require a nuanced judgement by the referee based on where the encounter takes place.

## 3. Roll for Reaction

If both parties are not surprised – roll reaction normally .

If the players gain surprise – wait to see what the players do before rolling reaction for monsters, or NPCs. If the players attack without waiting to parlay, then a reaction from the creature will determine fight, or flight only. Of course, they may also submit and cower in fear. In situations where players do not immediately exhibit hostility the NPCs, or monsters roll normally.

If the creatures have surprise – roll their reaction before deciding what they do.

If both sides gain surprise – Roll a reaction immediately and apply the result to how the monsters react, the actions of the party and the opposing side should be nearly simultaneous. Ask the players first what they plan to do and be clear there is no time to gauge the mood of the situation. Close range means there may not be time for a more subtle reaction other than fight or flight.

## Then do the Initial Reaction Roll

Die rolls for reaction are made on two d6 for a range of 2 – 12.

## Encounter Reaction:

**2** Immediately attack, perhaps even with a bonus for rage filled elan of +2 for 1-6 rounds if a die roll modifier results in a value of less than two. Or, if they feel they are outnumbered, a hostile/negative reaction means NPCs and monsters may retreat. If they have surprise, the players may not be aware there were any creatures at all. Though, adding a 25% chance they dropped an inconsequential item in their hurry to leave is always a fun addition.

Players: "Why is there a goblin shoe lying in the hall?" They will have no idea they just had an encounter with goblins.

**3 – 5** Hostile, or distrustful. You must think like a monster and decide what they do next. This is similar to rolling a 2, yet it can be much more nuanced if the creature encountered is sentient. Do they charge in headfirst or do something devious, like laying spiked balls on the floor before them for the players to be injured on?

**6 – 8** Uncertain, or cautious reaction. Perhaps watchful until the players choose a path of action. You may need to re-roll the reaction dice to clarify what the situation is if the players don't do something which will cause a more definite reaction.

**9 – 11** Friendly, or curious. A friendly allied creature may ask to join the adventurers or at least offer advice as to what lies ahead. In the case of opposing NPC factions or monsters this may mean they see the possibility to gain something from the players - maybe a bribe to allow passage, thus avoiding a fight which would benefit neither side. See Reaction Modifiers below.

**12** Overtly friendly or keenly interested in the party. With this reaction the NPC or monster is eager to be friends or will seek some way to avoid combat. What if the NPCs or monsters offer the players a bribe for safe passage?

The positive 9 through 12 results will often create the possibility for either side to make a common gesture requesting parley: an empty weaponless hand held palm forward, or for some cultures a valuable item or weapon thrown on the ground.

I ran a game once where the random encounter was a party of Evil High Priests and their retinue. They rolled high on their reaction. Hands upheld to show a non-hostile posture, the retinue of cultists merely wanted to walk past the players in single file and continue with their business. Perhaps they were on their way to a secret meeting or ritual. The underworld can be a strange place indeed. Even sworn enemies will sometimes avoid conflict.

Different cultures use differing gestures. What if these people throw a glove on the ground when wanting to make friends? How will the players react to this seeming challenge to combat? Even friendly encounters can end up in violence due to misunderstandings. People and monsters are complicated.

## 4. Apply Reaction Modifiers

The modifiers are based on pre-existent biases, as well as gestures of good or ill will.

The initial reaction value should be written down and may shift in either direction due to bias.

The die roll might be modified by -2 or +2 depending on the kinds of creatures being encountered. For example: a typical band of orcs will always have a negative bias toward those filthy human raiders who kill their children, and people or creatures who associate amicably with

human society might gain a positive modifier. One can usually determine what value to apply based on difference in species or alignment. In a city it could merely be a difference in clan, guild, or social status.

Tally the initial roll with the modifier to gain a result. See example here:

$$8 \text{ (Initial Roll)} - 2 \text{ (Bias)} = 6$$

The extreme results of 2 or 12 should be difficult to change, requiring a very large offering of gold for strong negative reactions, or outright violence in the case of a very positive reaction, for example.

Some creatures will never become true friends with the players, as it is just in their nature to remain hostile.

The die roll results are never revealed to the players. A devious monster or NPC might feign a positive reaction until such a time as they can proceed with acting on the intent of their actual rolled reaction.

## Additional Modifiers to Reaction

Reactions may be modified through actions which occur during the encounter.

Assuming the encounter is not entirely hostile, offers of payment or some kind of favor will shift the reaction roll +2 toward the friendly/favorable range.

Example:

$$8 \text{ (Initial Roll)} - 2 \text{ (Bias)} = 6 + 2 \text{ (Favor/Gift Modifier)} = 8$$

Acting suspicious and/or drawing steel may cause a drift of -2 to the result. Trying to be sneaky and move to a favorable attack angle while others are speaking may be noticed on a 1-2 roll using d6.

With a reaction result of 2 or lower it may not be possible to negotiate and modify the reaction roll, as a battle is likely already in process.

## Final Comments

I hope I have covered all the pertinent details. Things like combat moral checks are too complicated to discuss in this simple PDF. What this system does is get you to the point of knowing if you need to run a battle or not.

Of course, if you are like me you may want to modify this system and test something else based on it. Please do. Creating variants is half the fun of being the referee.

If you think of your dice as tea leaves or a tarot deck they will guide and inspire you to create a variety of interesting encounter situations based on these very simple die rolls and modifiers.

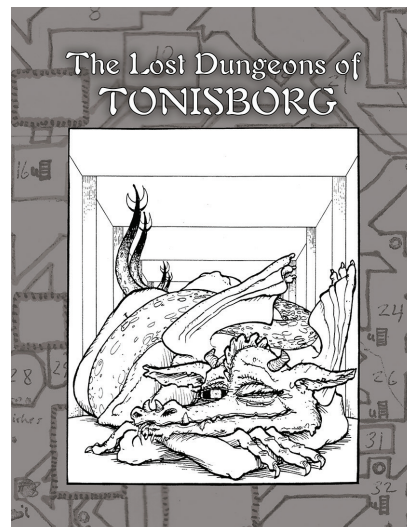
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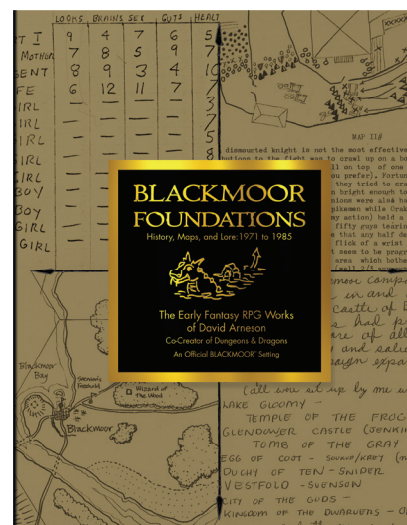
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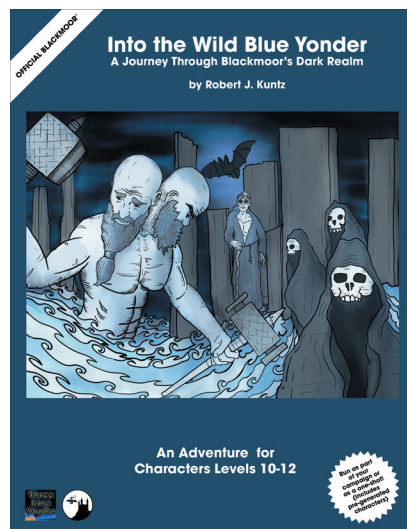
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