

AGAINST THE THUNDERING HORDE

Alternate Rules for Wading into Battle in Conan the Roleplaying Game®

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It's a staple of the sword-and-sorcery genre: characters will encounter situations where they're completely outnumbered. A war party of angry Picts sets an ambush, for instance, or a ship is boarded by pirates. Possibly they're attacked by a band of nomad raiders, or just have a misunderstanding with a mob of angry commoners. Characters in the Conan RPG will flex their mighty thews and wade into battle against all odds. Well and good for players, but for the games master all that bookkeeping can be a nightmare.

The following is an attempt at a simplified system to pit player characters against literally dozens of foes at once. It is highly cinematic and should only be used when dramatically appropriate in a campaign.

CREATING THE HORDE

First, determine the class and character level of the horde. No horde should be above 10th level. Use the information provided on the tables below:

BARBARIAN HORDE

Horde Level	Attack Bonus*	DV	Morale Save
1	+2	10	0
2	+3	11	0
3	+4	12	1
4	+5	13	1
5	+5	13	1
6	+6	14	2
7	+7	15	2
8	+8	16	2
9	+8	16	3
10	+9	17	3

COMMONER HORDE

Horde Level	Attack Bonus*	DV	Morale Save
1	+2	10	0
2	+3	11	0
3	+3	11	1
4	+4	12	1
5	+4	12	1
6	+5	13	2
7	+5	13	2
8	+6	14	2
9	+6	14	3
10	+7	15	3

NOMAD HORDE

Horde Level	Attack Bonus*	DV	Morale Save
1	+2	10	0
2	+3	11	0
3	+3	11	1
4	+4	12	1
5	+4	12	1
6	+5	13	2
7	+5	13	2
8	+6	14	2
9	+6	14	3
10	+7	15	3

PIRATE HORDE

Horde Level	Attack Bonus*	DV	Morale Save
1	+2	10	0
2	+3	11	0
3	+4	11	1
4	+5	12	1
5	+5	12	1
6	+6	13	2
7	+7	13	2
8	+8	14	2
9	+8	14	3
10	+9	15	3

*Includes Flanking bonus. A horde does not get multiple attacks.

Next, decide how many people comprise the horde, in multiples of 10. As a general rule, the higher the level the smaller the horde will be.

Finally, determine what weapons they are using and mark down the damage and armour piercing ratings of each.

The thing to bear in mind about hordes is that their strength is in numbers. They're faceless, generic opponents who are unremarkable and pose no threat as individuals, and can be cut down rather easily. You don't have to stat them out beyond the information above.

SLAUGHTERING THE HORDE

Each player rolls for attack and damage as normal. If the damage dealt by the player character is less than the horde's character level (the "Drop Threshold") that member of the horde is still standing. If the rolled damage is greater than the horde's Drop Threshold, the games master should make a tic mark on a sheet of paper. Each tic represents a member of the horde who has fallen in battle.

For example, Gunnar is fighting a horde of 3rd level pirates. The Drop Threshold is 3. For each attack he makes that does 3 or more points of damage, a pirate falls.

Characters with Cleave and Great Cleave have the potential to show off very impressively.

If the horde hasn't routed (see below) by the time the GM has made tic marks equal to the number of the horde, they're all dead or incapacitated.

ROUTING THE HORDE

For each 10 members of the horde who fall (10 tics on the GM's tracking sheet) make a Morale Save vs. DC 10. Add a -1 circumstance modifier for every 10 members of the horde still standing. If the roll succeeds, the horde continues the attack. If the roll fails, the horde is routed. Any members of the horde not currently engaged in combat will immediately run away, and those in melee will disengage and run on their next action.

For example, Gunnar's band of mercenaries is being overrun by 40 Shemite nomads. When 10 nomads have been killed the games master makes a morale check for them at -1. The roll succeeds, so the nomads continue their attack. After 20 have been killed, another check is made at -2. They fail this roll, and begin to fall back.

THE ARMoured HORDE

If the games master wishes to make the horde tougher, add the DR of the armour they're wearing to the Drop Threshold. For example, a 2nd level horde wearing mail shirts (DR 5) would have a Drop Threshold of 8; any attack that does 8 or more points of damage drops one member of the horde.

FALLING TO THE HORDE

Only six members of a horde can attack a character in melee at a time. The games master should consider each of these as a single opponent and make a single die roll to attack. If the roll hits, roll 6d of the appropriate type for the horde's weapons for damage. The player can deduct from the damage sustained.

For example, the games master rolls and hits Gunnar. The horde is using arming swords, so the GM rolls 6d10, for a total of 35 points. Gunnar is wearing a leather jerkin with DR4, so he only

takes 11 points (35 minus 24).

For ranged combat, the games master should make one die roll for every 10 members of the horde, and roll 10d if the appropriate type for damage. The player can deduct DRx10 from the damage sustained.

For example, the games master rolls and hits Gunnar with a volley from the horde's archers. The GM rolls 10d6, for a total of 26 points. Gunnar is wearing a leather jerkin with DR4, but the arrows have AP2, so he only gets DR2. Gunnar takes six points (26 minus 20).

As each member of the horde falls, another will takes his place so that each character will always be facing the maximum number of opponents. If the numbers of the horde are depleted to a point where characters are facing less than 6 opponents in melee or less than 10 in ranged combat, and the horde miraculously hasn't routed, simply decrease the number of damage dice to equal the number of opponents.

ATTACKS OF OPPORTUNITY

If the horde misses, a player character can utilize any appropriate attacks of opportunity against any member of the horde directly threatening him.

FATE POINTS

Hordes do not get to use Fate Points. The games master should, however, consider that a surviving member of a horde (or one left for dead) seeking revenge for the slaughter of his fellows can make a worthy adversary, one worthy of being written up in full and given a name so that he may return at a later date.

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