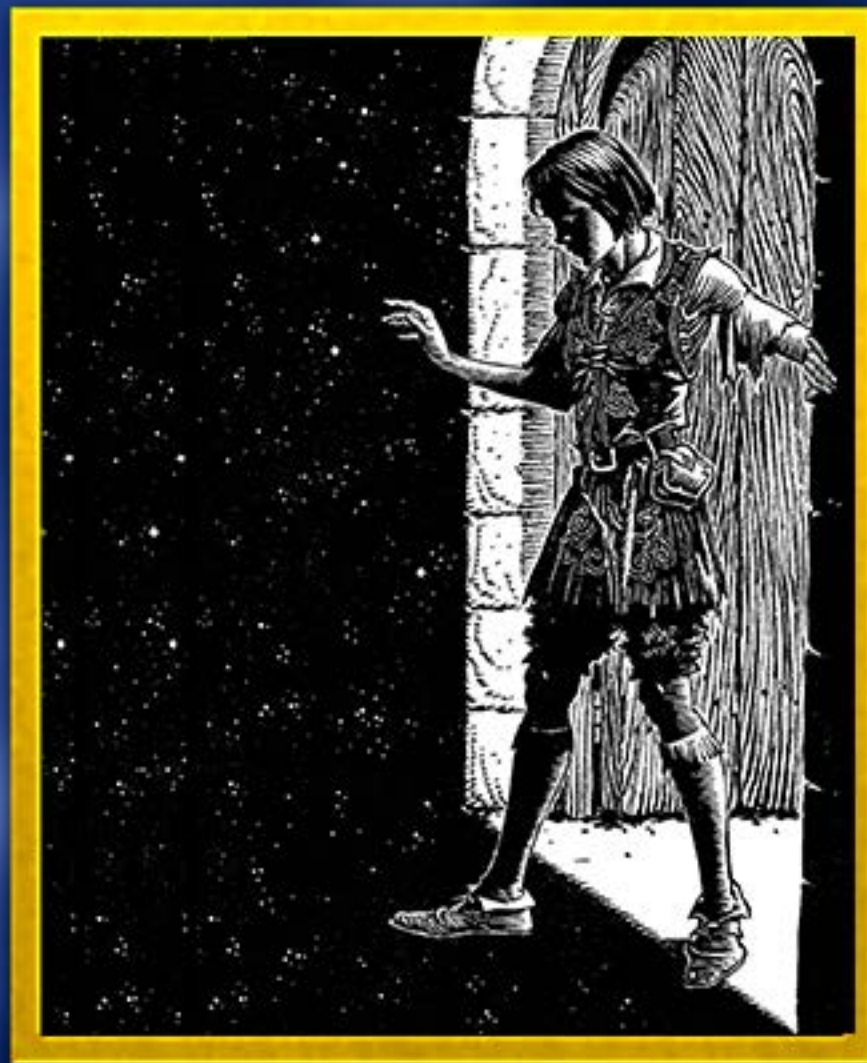


# THEY CAN SLEEP WHEN THEY'RE DEAD

How to Stop One-Encounter Days



Johnn Four  
roleplayingtips.com

# They Can Sleep When They're Dead

The Ultimate Guide to Stopping PCs From  
Camping After Every Encounter in D&D

*Stop One-Encounter Days!*

**By Johnn Four**

Errors? Omissions? [Please let me know](#)

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## Foreword

PCs who rest after each encounter make a wise tactical decision. I mean, combat is like a sprint + almost dying + lots of bleeding. Who wouldn't want to apply band aids and take'er easy for the rest of the day by the magic pool?

But over-resting and one-day encounters suck for storytelling and campaign fun. They create a stilted pace and wreak havoc on balancing encounters.

So let's fix the problem, probably by dragging the PCs kicking and screaming back into play. But so be it. We GMs have a number of push and pull type options to stop one-encounter adventuring days.

This guide will give you several methods to do this. The PCs might even enjoy some of them. ☺

That said, some of the entries in this book do carry a GM vs. Players or GM vs. Characters tone. Please weigh this carefully, as games can suffer from a game master who abuses their authority.

On the other hand, many folks play the adversarial GM role well, myself included, and it suits their style and players' preferences. Just a callout to please have sympathy and empathy for your players - good tactics should not be punished.

Most of the tips in this guide were supplied from Roleplaying Tips readers. I just edited and compiled them – the wisdom is all theirs. Thanks to everyone who contributed!

## They Can Sleep When They're Dead

GM Scott Dyer wrote in with a problem about PCs who rest too often, which causes havoc on game balance:

*I am running Skull and Shackles in Pathfinder. This adventure path is horrible about having the PCs resting after nearly every encounter.*

*They attack a ship on the horizon, then rest afterwards. They have one land battle, then rest afterwards. I mean, what are the chances they will encounter another ship that day or get to another island for another encounter?*

*Over and over it's one battle on a given day, with few grouped encounters. There are wandering monster tables, but I never use them because they don't have any meaning in the story, so why bother with them since it just slows down the adventure path?*

*I have also beefed up the encounters because of this resting problem. The party was walking over everything before I made the enemies harder. This adventure path is requiring too much work on my part to make encounters more challenging.*

*What are your suggestions, other than having them attacked night after night to interrupt these rests?*

**Johnn:** Hi Scott, thanks for the question. There are two GM problems afoot here.

First is not enough encounters strung together to break the one-encounter day problem.

Second is coming up with encounters for an isolated environment, like a ship on an ocean voyage.

The following tips address a bit of both, and I hope they help.

### 1. Think 3D

Issue threats from every dimension. And because we're talking RPGs here, I'm also talking about alternate universes, pocket dungeons, and parallel dimensions, including that weird Fifth Dimension cross-over shared by the classic 70s cartoons Spiderman and Rocket Robin Hood. (I need somebody to explain that one to me some day.)

- On the ocean, for example, I could launch encounters from:
- The air above => flying creatures, weather, floating castles and lairs
- The sea below => water creatures, whirlpools, submarines
- Port, starboard, aft and fore => other ships, life raft with suspicious survivors, dangerous flotsam

Look up, down, left and right. Try to envision the environment and fill it with people, places, and things.

You might also consult this article for more ideas: [100 Waterborne Encounters](#)

And, as mentioned, think outside reality for more encounter inspiration.

Back in school, one GM rewarded the party with a pocket dungeon. He drew a map on graph paper, folded it up and then literally drew it out of his pocket when awarding it to us.

The group could enter the dungeon, which existed outside time and space, and adventure to their hearts' delight.

I have used this idea more than once. Standard dungeoncraft applies. Put a secret that's key to the adventure at-hand in the centre. Plant treasure useful for upcoming challenges. Create complications like prisoners, curses, and factions to add spice to the current campaign.

The point is, use the fantastic if you get into a jam for encounter source and space. Think weird, fantasy, magical. And always think 3D.

## 2. Add NPCs

This is one of my favourite tips, which you'll hear often. Stir the plot by adding characters who do bad things, make bad decisions, or bring bad luck with them.

### Sabotage

One or more NPCs renders the party's camp defenses useless, permitting enemies to creep in and attack. Or they signal when the PCs are finally asleep. Or they trash important equipment or cripple mounts.

### Lure Into A Trap

Leucrottas are beasts that can imitate cries of someone in distress. The success of such encounters all depends on context. A cry from out of the blue in the wilderness gets everyone's guard up. A cry for help near the burning carts and wagons of a caravan will draw PCs without hesitation.

So when an NPC tries to lure the party into a trap, say by parking the campsite right on top a hidden trap door for his buddies to emerge from after dark, you just need the right context to pull it off well.

Alternatively, have NPCs trigger encounters when the PCs have agreed to rest yet again. Use stealth so the NPC can do this over and over again, if possible.

### Love Triangle

Nothing beats resources used in intra-party conflicts. Love triangles can pitch even brothers against each other. A love potion or charm spell might help the cause.

So far in these tips I've been leaning towards conflict and resource depletion, but encounters of any kind strung together make gameplay interesting. The main problem with over-resting PCs is the game shuts down after little plot progression each day.

So extra encounters of any type is a win for you. And love triangles can spawn many encounters, especially if one or more sides has an agenda that goes beyond romance.

### Spy

NPCs can also work as insiders to cause ambushes and other encounters.

For example, a spy could help a foe know exactly how to steal back a precious treasure the PCs stole. "Look, start a fire near their camp and make howling noises. Then have the others swing around the rear. When the fools rush over to put out the fire,

swoop in and look for a magic red bag near white destrier. Snatch it and run for your life.”

Now the PCs can't rest because they need to recover their bag of holding that not only has that cool magic item in it, but it has all their food and water too!

A great fantasy book I read last year was [The Red Wolf Conspiracy](#). Lots of pages spent time on voyages on a huge ship. Great encounter ideas there for sure. One plot thread covered a race of small people who could stand in the palm of your hand, called the ixchel. They triggered several encounters and complicated various events on board during sailing journeys.

The ixchel are a good example of using NPCs to keep the game going even when the characters want to put on their jammies and tuck themselves into bed or are in isolated environments.

### 3. Stay On-Board

If the overcautious party won't come to the adventure, have the adventure come to them. Intrude on their camp. Use the PCs' ship or vehicle for encounters.

Drawing again from *The Red Wolf Conspiracy*, there was an unexpected piece of cargo the hero had to discover and deal with => an ancient evil creature!

Watch the TV series *Serenity* for more examples of what can go wrong on a ship. Engine failure, pirates, strange cargos, strange passengers.

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Draw a map of the ship to inspire encounters. It sometimes helps to have tangible representation of all the spaces and how they're used to trigger ideas.

### 4. Side Plots

Dig in to character backgrounds and desires to create side plots. These involve encounters not related to the main story, but because they are character-driven you'll find players wanting to rest less or stir things up to trigger encounters on their own.

The basic reward for a side plot is spotlight time. One-on-one gamery with the GM. Sure, other PCs might tag along, invited or not, but it's the PC with the side plot who's running the table for a bit. That's always a nice feeling.

With players motivated this way, they will dream up their own game moves. If you listen carefully and roll with their "gameplay offers," your players can bail you out when you can't think of any encounters to keep the adventuring day going.

### 5. They Can Sleep When They're Dead

I've got a freebie for you that goes into even more detail and ideas on how to help characters adventure longer each day.

It's a lesson grabbed in its entirety from FasterCombat, "Lesson 2.11 They Can Sleep When They're Dead." You can download it even if you are not enrolled in the GMing course.

[\*\*Download Lesson 2.11 They Can Sleep When They're Dead\*\*](#)

## They Can sleep When They're Dead

I hope this PDF helps. I feel we are always better off working on storytelling skills so we build plots the PCs feel compelled to unravel instead of resting.

And great storytelling always trumps tactics meant to prod and cajole reluctant players into just one more encounter. Classic carrot versus stick. But I know how much a good story drives me to game more, and I think players are the same.

So while these tips offer tactical advice for triggering more encounters, be sure to wrap them up in a rousing story that'll inspire players to game "just a little longer" to see what happens next. That beats Disenchanted Rust Monsters With Night Vision Goggles Parachuting From Rocs Into the Middle of Camp at Midnight every time.

## Tactical Tips For Over-Resting PCs

I received a tip request from GM Diego Virasoro. Below is his request, and the follows all the responses and tips from Roleplaying Tips readers.

*Hi Johnn,*

*I started to GM about a year ago with a group of 5 players. I've been learning a lot by making my own errors and from the collective wisdom present on the Internet.*

*Still, I am facing a problem I cannot find a solution for: over-sleeping/resting characters. In D&D, resting gives you a chance to recover spells and hit points. Currently, my problem is spells. By resting after each encounter, my players can unleash on each monster a massive array of spells that easily kill it.*

*I came up with a few ideas against it, but they were not enough:*

*1) The game has a mechanism built-in to prevent this, such as having to wait one full day before recovering spells. But by using a simple spell like Rope Trick, or moving to a less dangerous area, they can wait as long as necessary with no problems.*

*Rope Trick puts them in a new empty dimensional world where they can rest for 1 hour per spellcaster level, or twice that if, as in our case, they have the Extend Spell feat. So yes, there are built-in mechanics, but they are easy to circumvent.*

*2) The dungeon is dangerous and so they might meet random monsters by waiting too much. In our case, this is again resolved with Rope Trick, but generally there are always safe areas in a dungeon that PCs can go to, like inside a room with a secret door*

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*with a watch set. At most, they can leave the dungeon and come back the next day.*

*3) A simple trick in a GM's sleeve would be to put a time limit on quests, and I definitely plan on doing that. However, that's something that can only be used once in a while. It would look awkward, I think, if each dungeon had some reason for having to be completed within a certain time.*

*4) Similarly, you can prevent them from finding safe areas by closing the dungeon entrance behind them, but this can again only be used rarely.*

*Currently, the result of all of this is more and more of my players decide to play spellcasters as soon as their previous character dies.*

*How have other GMs solved this?*

*Thanks Johnn and keep up the excellent work with Roleplaying Tips.*

[Johnn: [here's a description of Rope Trick](#)]

Reader replies start on the next page...

## 1. Diego and the Narcoleptics

*From Telas*

Remember that the dungeon is not a static environment. Once the Bad Guys find out something is killing them off, they will take vigorous actions to defend their home, sometimes forging unusual alliances. Imagine if a high-speed military strike force paused mid-assault for nine hours, and how their enemy would respond during the lull. If the monsters cannot stop the party, they may well flee (with all their treasure and possibly the object of the quest). It should go without saying that those monsters were not "defeated", and the XP for them is not earned.

The Rope Trick spell is neat, but it's not bulletproof. That 'window' is Invisible, but radiates magic and can be seen by things that see Invisible objects. Remember the rules on spellcasters and their rest - at least 9 hours (eight of rest + 1 of study) for some of them. Also, is the party hauling around a Bag of Holding or Handy Haversack? Are they taking them into the extra dimensional space created by the Rope Trick? \*insert evil DM laugh here\*

OK, so the whole party's going Wizard on you.... Their adversaries will notice this, and the smart ones will take steps to combat it. How are their Grapple Modifiers? Monks are famous for being good grapplers and having good saving throws, and captured wizards almost always have their spellbooks taken. Rogues have Evasion and can ignore those pesky Fireballs, and anyone knowing the party's tactics will take steps to neutralize them through the proper 'buff' spells and potions. Perhaps a rock with a Silence spell on it gets thrown into the middle of the group? There's always Black Tentacles....

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The point is, a well-balanced party can easily wipe out an unbalanced party if they take advantage of their strengths. Spellcasters are easy targets if they don't have time to 'buff' themselves, or if they're caught by surprise. If the Bad Guys get to 'buff', life gets brutal for your little gang of casters.

- Enlarge Person + Bull's Strength + Bear's Endurance = one tough Barbarian
- Cat's Grace + Haste = high-speed tumbling/backstabbing Rogue
- Cat's Grace + Prayer + Haste = Ranger-sniper

And so on....

Then there's all those "Full Round" spells: Summon Monster, Call Lightning, etc.

My favorite ego-check is the lowly kobold. Since they can't stand toe-to-toe with anything, kobolds tend to ambush and harry an invader, letting their traps do the dirty work. A good kobold lair will channel the party into a number of kill zones, with no chance of retreat (remember: kobolds have natural mining and trap-making skills). If the party gets to be too much, they're pushed out of the lair, if at all possible.

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### Kobold tactics:

- Traps that split up a party
- Web + Summon (spider) Swarm
- Immobilizing traps + Dire Weasels
- Immobilizing traps + Sneak Attack (including ranged and spell attacks)
- Poison-tipped crossbow bolts
- The ability of all intelligent foes to target a single opponent until he drops

The kobold's favored class is the Sorcerer, so it's pretty likely there are a few casters in the group. They might recognize a Rope Trick (with a good Spellcraft roll), and attempt to Detect Magic to see the 'window'. A Dispel Magic will soon follow (once all the dinner guests, er, troops are gathered/buffed).

Finally, a note regarding Challenge Ratings: CRs are built with a four-person party, of 25-point-build, with items in line with the "Value Per Level" table in the DMG. More characters, more points, or more magic items mean that the party should be facing higher CRs. I made this mistake early on, and couldn't fathom why the six-person, 32-point-buy party kept waltzing over my encounters.

## 2. Dealing with Over-Resting

*From Kit Reshawn*

This problem is something I have encountered and struggled with until I realized it was only happening because I allowed it. Here are ways to get around this problem, using tweaks of what were already tried/suggested.

### 1) Use Of Game Mechanics (Spells Recover Once Per 24 Hours)

I would nip this in the bud right away. While you do mention there are ways around it, they are not THAT overpowered. For example, to even be able to make 24 hours they would need to be at least level 12 with the extend spell feat. Now, if you are worried they will go that route, you can deny them access to the spells which would let them circumvent the problem. Don't let them find any scrolls of it, don't have it on sale, and don't let them pick the spell when they level up. If they complain, state that the spell does not exist in your game world. You are the GM; your word is final on this issue. Just be sure that you don't give it to any baddies either.

### 2) Fewer Safe Spots

Make it so safe spots need to be cleared. Have a floor that will not be safe until all the baddies have been cleared. This forces the PCs to make a significant amount of progress before they can rest safely.

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- If the party tries to leave, then have all the sentient monsters in the cave leave as well (they did just fend off an attack on their home and are less likely to stay around for the next hit) or plant traps.
- If they plant traps, put them in places the party feels is already safe.
- Make the party fight through ambushes in areas they had already cleared. After all, how can they be sure that nothing moved in during their time away?
- If the monsters leave, they should take all the loot they were protecting with them (how often have you moved and left all your stuff behind?) Then have them attack the nearby village for revenge.

### 3) All Mage Party

If all else fails and your party is mostly mages, then you have one final trick you can play. Make their magic useless. A mage is pretty well helpless without his spell book. Anti Magic field will nix magic completely. Archers are the mage's bane, and you should have them continually hampering the mages.

Well-placed and planned spells make whole groups of spell casters useless. A party with only one mage is only mildly hampered if a silence spell is cast on it because they still have fighters, rogues, paladins, rangers, and monks. A party of all mages/clerics would be hurting and probably defeated.

With these tools you should have an easier time dealing with over resting parties. The key is to be consistent and firm in it. The reason for not being able to rest so often needs to be there all the time; it just doesn't have to be the same reason all the time. If you

do it well, your group will come to rely on it less and less, and should even start thinking of ways to push that extra inch on their own. After all, it is the times when you are not sure you can win that are the most exciting.

### 3. Magic Cannot Always Be Trusted

*From David H.*

**Problem:** Players are using Rope Trick or Teleport Without Error to strategically manipulate the threats they face and damage they deal out, helping them deciding when and where to fight. That sure is surrendering the initiative to the players and ensuring the GM loses control.

**Solution:** Take away their complacency that magic is going to work all the time. For example, in Forgotten Realms, the weave could be affected, or the Ley Lines in Birthright.

- 1) Have wild magic zones where magic either does not work properly--it is a null zone with no spellcasting working, or the caster cannot choose what spell is cast. Randomly pick a school of magic and a spell to go with it. Give a visual accompaniment, such as purple winds howling as a Necromantic Spell is cast.
- 2) A group of witch hunters or a religious order arrives to burn the witch - the PC magic user). I wonder if every player would choose a magic user when they know being hunted down and persecuted would be their fate?
- 3) Who says a Rope Trick empty dimensional world stays empty? There are a lot of things out there, hungry and looking to traverse

the planes. They could be followed, or have entities waiting for them when they arrive.

4) Create a cursed item or place. Divine or arcane power will not work. Rather, it flows into the item/place and calls its followers to it.

5) This one bends the rules a bit - an astral signature that allows spell casters to be tracked by astral creatures.

## 4. Play It Against Them

*From Triptothebrain*

I deal with rule abuse by playing it against the PCs. This is possible because their actions are now predictable. In your case, given a quest, the players rest frequently to restore used spells.

As mentioned, this means they take a lot more time to finish one than they should. Two ideas popped into my head:

1) Secretly send other heroes to do the same quest, so when the PCs get there, there's nothing left to do. Some other hero was here three days ago, slew the evil wizard, and took the treasure. If this happens often enough, you can have the same NPC group beating the PCs to it every time - the perfect rivals.

Be sure to rub the PCs' faces in it with local lore favoring the other heroes, erect a few statues, write a few poems and a play about them. Help show the players that time is of the essence.

2) Alternatively, if the above fails to put a spark in them, have the players embark on a quest to stop a villain from performing a ritual everyone believes will restore some evil race of creatures

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upon the land or something similar. The true intent of this ritual is to destroy magic. (The villain has been foiled too many times because of magic.)

Of course, the players will take their usual time as they fight through the hordes and get there late. If they are late, they can only blame themselves.

Even if they get there in time, it can still have this effect. Magic becomes not destroyed, but altered. Perhaps it now requires a wizard to use part of their life force to cast spells. The effect is that a wizard loses all memory of the spell once cast. They even find it impossible to re-learn the spell from a spellbook until a certain period of time has passed.

Resting has no effect on the recovery of cast spells. Worse yet, if they attempt to cast the same spell or spell-like effect from another source (like a scroll or wand) the drain on their life force is unbearable (forcing a constitution check with or without penalties or they drop unconscious). It's sort of like a magic virus.

This will prevent them from resting to get spells back. You can even make your own rules about magic now since this ritual altered it.

You could even make the effect taint certain magic so that hiding in extra-dimensional spaces causes no time to pass, or negates the renewal of their life force.

You could make the time it takes to recover the life force random and not tell the players how long until they can re-learn the spell. It could be days till they are able to cast another Rope Trick spell.

## 5. Smart Monsters Will React

*From Friv*

An easy way to deal with this situation is with intelligent monsters, especially ones who have a single low-level spellcaster around. If piles of dead monsters start showing up in a dungeon, goblin patrols don't report back, or similar things happen, monsters will figure out that there's a party of something hostile in the area.

Run adventures where every time the characters rest, traps get added, alarm spells get dropped, and enemy monsters are increasingly prepared for the fight. Have the monsters react the way an army would: get nervous and start being much more cautious. If the players realize punching through is less dangerous in the long-term than waiting, they're less likely to wait.

## 6. Turn It Around On Them

*From Dan'l Danehy-Oakes*

What are the monsters doing while the players are resting up? Let one sentient monster see them ducking up into their Rope Trick dimension, and it can have a very special welcoming committee waiting for them when they come back down. (In dysfunctional-campaign-speak, this translates as, "If you want to use all your firepower for every encounter, you'll have every encounter in this dungeon at once.")

I wouldn't go that far the first time, but give them a few hints by having lesser Bad Things happen while they're hiding up, and save this "nuclear option" in case they don't take the hints.

What sort of Bad Things? Perhaps a rival group comes in and cleans out the dungeon while they're in there. Perhaps whoever built the dungeon in the first place restocks the monsters, but not the treasures, they've already been gone through. Perhaps a new monster moves in to fill the niche they've cleared out. Make it something that fits the milieu.

## 7. Rope Trick Tactics

*From Mike Miller*

Here are some ideas to combat this:

### 1) Rope Trick

The party has neatly isolated themselves and are trapped and primed to be ambushed, so the monsters find them because one of the monsters is hiding nearby and sees them go up the rope or they are tracked by hound-like sniffers to the spot, who:

- Attack each PC as they emerge
- Attack the party once their bolt hole has been dispelled

### 2) Inside A Room With A Secret Door

- The room seems like a nice place to sleep for a basilisk
- Wall up the exits to the room with bricks or collapse the corridor

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- Place an explosive ward on the room
- Secret rooms can also have secret doors, which is perfect for a 2 pronged attack
- Secret doors are only secret to those who don't know about them
- The secret door can only be opened from the inside within the first hour after it has been open from the outside; after that it is locked from the inside
- Maybe the unlocking mechanism unlocks a different door after the first hour

### **3) They Leave The Dungeon And Come Back The Next Day**

- A new monster moves into the now empty section of the lair and fortifies the entrance
- The PCs are followed home
- Seal the entrance before the PCs can leave or after they return (so they can't get away next time)
- A rival party sees the PCs leave, so they enter, kill the monsters, loot the treasure, claim the reward and return to the tavern to drink and make fun of the wimpy PCs getting spanked

### **4) Time Limit**

A simple trick in a GM's sleeve would be to put a time limit on quests. Time always passes, and while you don't have to put a time limit on all quests, things should change as time goes on.

Villains get tougher and acquire more minions. Monsters breed, grow, and move on to new territory. If their home is broken into,

they don't just wait for it to happen again or for the thieves to leave. They get new locks, hire guards, set traps, or maybe run and hide, waiting for the day they can get revenge.

## 5) Party Of Spellcasters

More and more players decide to play spellcasters as soon as their previous character dies. Spellcasters can't handle everything and the indiscriminate use of spells can be a great danger to the success of the party.

- Hordes of small monsters are quick work for a Fireball, but in a wooden building or a tunnel with methane fumes and other combustible rubbish a fire ball could get the whole party killed.
- Who wants to be the mage required to memorize nothing but detect traps to try and replace a thief?
- Use creatures that are immune or resistant to magic.
- You could have lots of kobolds shooting arrows from concealed spots.
- The use of magic to route such small foes awakens something that should have remained asleep.

## 8. Combat Over-Resting

*From Robert E. Jones*

### 1) Use Smaller Encounters

A lot of the problem of over-resting comes from a desire to make each fight challenging. A challenging fight, however, leaves players with spells exhausted and low on hit points, so they're

naturally inclined to rest. Once a GM has set this pattern, players will rest even if they have substantial resources left because they're afraid the next encounter will finish them off.

A good solution to this is to throw in a goodly number of easy encounters. These can be little booby-traps that only do a few points of damage, simple obstacles that only take a single spell to bypass, or monsters that are clearly outclassed by the party (think Bite Sized).

Small encounters give the players a chance to show off. They also make things easy on the GM because no one expects a lot of treasure out of them, so small encounters can help cure a party that's gotten too much in the way of magic and money by letting them level without picking up more items.

These little fights shouldn't scare players into a need to rest, and the GM can gradually play around with the number and power of monsters to throw in. Just remember to keep the stakes low. Don't let the whole adventure rest on a couple of kobolds, they'll let you down every time!

## **2) Use Wilderness Or Town Adventures**

Town adventures can make resting interesting because you never quite know when you are safe or not. Town fighting is usually pretty sneaky. It also crimps the magic user's style due to prejudice against magic/notoriety/collateral damage issues.

Wilderness adventures can give resting a different problem. If you spend all your time resting you never get out of the wilderness! Imagine the players' collective frustration if they've had to rest three times (three full days) after travelling only halfway to the

dungeon they want to loot! Combined with small encounters (from above), the players will certainly decide to move forward even without all their spells ready.

### **3) Use Recurring Enemies**

Recurring enemies are intelligent bad guys who will take advantage of the time off the PCs give them by resting. Goblins using hit and run tactics can heal their losses and summon reinforcements, while the player characters are snoozing in their extra dimensional hammocks, for example. Regenerating monsters, like trolls, are another example.

For hit and run tactics to work, the monster has to be able to run. That means being faster or sneakier than the PCs, or even just knowing where the right secret doors are.

An intelligent villain, like a vampire, might decide to go over to the offensive, while the player characters are safely out of the picture. After the PCs have had to drive off the same band of ogres for the third time, that extra dimensional nap is going to seem mighty claustrophobic!

### **4) Give Them Something To Guard**

If a nearby village is getting raided by vicious ogres, the player characters can't just sneak off and take a break whenever they feel like it. Instead, they have to hang around and take each encounter as it comes.

A moving target, like a caravan or group of religious pilgrims, also needs guarding and won't stand for taking constant time off to

rest up. Just make sure that whatever the PCs are supposed to be watching won't fit in their Rope Trick!

### **5) Give Them Something To Gain**

Let the PCs glimpse a great treasure down the hall, but also its guards, who see them as well. If the PCs decide to charge forward, they can fight the guards before the treasure can be carried off.

Likewise, maybe they hear a prisoner cry for help from a dungeon level somewhere below them. Do they leave this person to die or risk their necks to help out? These are the kinds of problems heroes should have all the time!

### **6) Combine Your Techniques**

This is where it gets interesting. Mounted orcish raiders (whose evil cleric is back at their heavily fortified base camp) can fight the PCs then run away to heal before they get beaten.

While they're at it, they can ride off with a few prisoners for an after dinner snack, all the while promising to be back before dawn! Maybe that's a bit much, but if it doesn't get your players out of their hole, nothing will.

There are a few interesting possibilities to keep your players moving when they'd rather kick back and get their high powered spells back. By far the most important is to use small encounters.

They're good against a party and give a GM lots of room to maneuver. Once you have a good idea of when your players like to rest, you know just when to hit them with the baddies!

## 9. Two Suggestions For The Over Resting Problem

*From Tyler Elkink*

1) If the party's powerful enough to cast extra-dimensional pocket universe spells, they're powerful enough to attract extra-dimensional predators.

Certainly, simply using Rope Trick ONCE in a certain area won't be enough to attract the attention of whatever hungry or greedy creatures that might be waiting on the plains, and not even twice, but three times? Three times, in rapid succession, in the same area? That sort of trans-dimensional disturbance can't go on for long without drawing some curious or slaving non-Euclidian beastie!

2) I owe this one to the new Rune Soldier Louie anime. If the party takes a week or two to get to the bottom of a dungeon, and they're secreting themselves away to rest, it would be unsurprising if other parties of adventurers bypassed them in the night.

A powerful party's exploits is the talk of any town, and other groups are sure to hear of their having left for Treasure X. Imagine the party's consternation (and insistence at cleaning dungeons out faster) when they find someone else cleaned the dungeon out in the 8 hours they were "conserving their strength."

## 10. GM Control

*From Aaron P.*

Diego Virasoro brought up an issue with over-resting players who exploit Rope Trick specifically to regain hit points and spells. There are a couple of solutions to his problem other than time limits on the quests and closing dungeon entrances.

- 1) As the GM, you always have control over what spells the characters can learn. If you think that Rope Trick (or any other spell) is too powerful, either raise its level, or disallow it. That's a bit heavy handed, and should only be used as a last resort and after discussing the issue with the players, but it is always an option.
- 2) Dispel magic. That dumps the PCs right into the middle of an encounter. If it's an area dispel, there might be other problems for the party as well if they rely on other long-lasting enchantments. Similarly useful spells: dimensional anchor and anti-magic field.
- 3) Not every encounter is a dungeon crawl. Include more political/social encounters and challenges.
- 4) Magic traps that only go off when extra-dimensional magic is used (Rope Trick, Dimension Door, Summon Monster, Teleport, Ethereal Jaunt, Blink).

This makes it something that doesn't only penalize this one tactic, and could be the genesis for an interesting antagonist who is paranoid of extra-dimensional threats that he believes want to eat his soul, or who's been ambushed more than once by a party teleporting into his keep and summoning hordes of beasts.

Sometimes, the characters should be able to use whatever spells or abilities they have.

You shouldn't always nullify their keen new spell. However, almost every ability in D&D has some counter, and common tricks, like this one, would be well known to intelligent antagonists, and intelligent enemies should prepare contingency plans to use against this tactic.

### **11. Timekeeping is Important**

*From: JFK*

Always keep in mind that resting takes time. In first edition D&D, a few things like timekeeping were stressed much more than in later versions, but timekeeping remains a very important aspect of any long term game.

If the PCs are resting and regaining HP and Spells, so too are the monsters resting and regaining the same! Remember to reset your monsters every time the PCs take a break. If the PCs have already engaged the monster before resting, unless it is extremely stupid, that monster might have spent its resting time preparing more appropriate actions for the PCs.

If they are simply resting after every battle, so they are fresh with spells/hp, make sure you keep track of food and water. How long can the PCs stay down there in the dungeon without eating and drinking?

## They Can sleep When They're Dead

You can simplify this by checking off three meals a day, and one entire waterskin per day per PC, without detailing each meal. Or, you can indeed try to get the PCs to tell you exactly what they are eating and drinking. Either way, eventually food and drink will run out if they are resting after every battle.

Another important factor is the passage of time itself. Why are the PCs down there to begin with? If they are rescuing someone, preventing something from happening, trying to get something before somebody else does, or retrieving something needed by others, the longer they take the more chance of events unfolding without them.

Suppose the Mayor sent them to get the Staff of Roses, which will grow an immense wall of thorns around the village, saving it from the impending Giantkin attack? Make sure they know the attack will probably come in less than three days. If they still rest too often, when they return, they find the village destroyed! Nothing says realism like things happening without the PCs, and although they might regret some outcomes, they will likely enjoy the game much more.

## 12. Unbalanced Campaign

*From David Hickman*

More and more I see players using game mechanics, such as spells, to game the game. In your case, use of the Rope Trick spell has unbalanced your campaign, as would any spell or device that allows them to always be at peak level.

## They Can sleep When They're Dead

I would talk to the players and explain to them the problem. If that doesn't work, take matters into your own hands. The next use of Rope Trick only allows the spell caster to move to safety and is trapped for a number of days, weeks, or months (your choice) per level due to overuse of the spell or device.

Meanwhile, the remainder of the party is forced to either wait or move on and face the dangers without him/her. If they choose to wait, wandering monsters should soon become aware of them and come to investigate.

The use of the spell should be when rest is the most important issue.

I would also like to add that magic in my campaign is rare, and a spellcaster must find any and all spells, or at the very least, find an NPC who would be willing to allow him/her to copy them. Most of the spell casters in my campaign never have a full complement of spells. This also lets me pick and choose which spells they can find and learn. It keeps the entire campaign in balance.

### **13. Time Pressure**

*From Ted O.*

There are different kinds of time pressure. The classic "world will end in 3 days, if you don't...", but also:

- 1) Every hour another hostage dies.
- 2) The bad guys sent for reinforcements, who are expected to arrive in 2 hrs.

## They Can sleep When They're Dead

- 3) One of the party was bitten by a suspected lycanthrope, and needs medicine in 3 days.
- 4) Others are busy looting this dungeon, and we keep coming across emptied hoards (just a few stray coins & mundane items remaining--clear signs of a ransack/clearing-out.)
- 5) The bad guys are moving the hostages/loot/ring-forge to a secret location; if we give them time, we won't know where they are (not immediate disaster, but potential for bad future stuff).
- 6) Any variation on the theme of the bad guys doing some sort of evil that grows over time, and giving them more time makes things worse (creating an army of war golems over the course of several weeks).

For the Rope Trick, render the guy who knows Rope Trick unconscious (fairly, in battle). Make him difficult to rouse. Or make HIM the one bitten by a were-whatever and, with the coming full moon, he is in no condition to cast on the party's behalf.

Again, think of variations. Walls/slippery-slopes that must be descended. Stairs that break behind the party. Secret doors that open with a lever and close 10 seconds later (perhaps with a sharp, bladed edge), encouraging the party to rush through to the side where there is no lever. Don't be disappointed if the party decides not to go any deeper.

Have monsters use Silence, grapple, and little, nibbly attacks that bug the hebejebes out of spellcasters, but would be a simple matter for anyone who knew how to use an axe.

Keep in mind that the game isn't PCs vs. DM. Ask your players what they'd like to see happen and/or how they'd like you to handle these situations. Do your players WANT you to just give them an easy adventure with ph4t loot throughout? If so, see if you can work with them. Do they like a serious challenge to overcome? If so, ask them to work with you on that.

## 14. Chat With Your Group

*From Lord Damian*

Rules wise, my solution to this would be to state that resting using Rope Trick is only good for healing, and will not count as rest to restore spells, as the extra-dimensional space is simply too jarring to allow it.

Perhaps there is a "disagreement" among the gods causing a disharmony in the fabric of reality. If the players have a problem with it, tell them you felt their use of the spell was abusive. If they continue to play in this manner, start reducing their XP, explaining you gain no knowledge from being unchallenged.

As for "safe" areas in a dungeon, I don't believe in them. If there's a room with a secret door, simply opening it makes it easier for intelligent monsters to find (trails in the dust on the floor, foot prints that disappear into the wall). I always reduce the DC to find a secret door when it has been used in such circumstances. And any denizen of the dungeon has the opportunity to know about the secret door, even if they never used it.

Walls and doors don't stop a creature with phasing, extra dimensional travel abilities, or even something that burrows. And

never forget natural dangers, such as earthquakes, or floods. Maybe that safe area is only safe because the local monsters know it floods to the ceiling every time it rains, and there just happens to be a rain storm coming.

Also, I would also talk to my players and work out why this bothered me more than it did them. AND, if this is how they play, start making adventures with that in mind.

## **15. PCs That Rest, Memorize And Unleash**

*From Dave Lowry*

Just some quick feedback about the dilemma regarding characters that rest, memorize, and unleash.

- 1) Have the adventures in a city where large castings of spells would be very bad, such as Fireballs injuring civilians, bringing the city guard with orders to prevent disruptive spellcasting.
- 2) Keeping track of spell components can hamper repeated casting of spells. Religious figures will feel their god's displeasure at being a spell battery.
- 3) Keep track of provisions and don't let them learn Create Food And Water. Priests that do this should demand tribute to their god.
- 4) Create Invocationitis, Conjurationitis and other spellcasting diseases. Every time a magician fires off the same spell again, he's getting cramps in his hands from doing the somatic gestures.

## They Can sleep When They're Dead

5) Killing the monster isn't the objective - they need its help for some reason.

6) Climbing into a Rope Trick whilst carrying a bag of holding...hazardous! Big bang, nasty damage, and maybe shunts the party into another dimension where Rope Trick doesn't work (an adventure in itself) - very good if the party is with a henchman and don't know he's got a bag of holding.

7) Give the PCs people they are responsible to protect (like a diplomat) so that there's more than 8 people in the party. Rope Trick can only hold eight people. That way, some party members are left outside for wandering monsters to eat. Remember that pulling the rope up into the pocket counts as an additional creature. If they don't, then the monsters may climb up.

8) Whilst the party is continually resting, another adventuring group has overtaken them and completed the quest, thereby negating the reward. This could be a continual hook for rivalry.

9) Send them to the Astral Plane where time passes at a fraction of the speed. For example, 100 years must pass for each day of rest. Of course, this only ages them a day, but can you imagine not doing anything for that time? None magicians would go mad!

10) World based effects where casting time is slowly increased. For example, magic is being used up in the world, so casting times are now doubled. At the rate the party continues on, casting times will extend ten fold.

If they're part of a Mage Guild, their peers will find out about this and spread the word to decrease people casting spells with such fervor. This may also give rise to an apocalyptic religious cult

dubbed Mage Killers, who roam the land looking for magicians they can slay.

11) The NPC they have to deal with is highly distrustful of magicians, and will only deal with the fighter or paladin.

12) When they die, don't let them play another spellcaster!

## 16. Intelligent, Dynamic Antagonists

*From Duncan Rice*

Play intelligent and dynamic antagonists. Ask yourself, "What is the enemy doing during this time?"

- A low intelligence band of creatures may be gaining new recruits or setting traps and barricades along entrances and pathways the party has taken in the past, or in front of them.
- A moderately intelligent opponent may send out a hunting party to find or ambush the players.
- A wiser foe, such as a high level magic-user, will be setting up wards and memorizing spells to counter the players. Perhaps he will hire someone with skills that counter the players' attack style.

Just remember that, while the party is resting, their opponents do not sit idly by and wait for the next assault. The enemy is aware of his losses and likely what caused them. The enemy can use the time the party spends resting to learn about them and anticipate their next move.

Don't forget to give the party a hint of what is going on. Have a battle cleaned up, the wounded and dead carried away, or a threatening goblin message scrawled on the wall. While keeping

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in mind that it is not the GM's task to play against the party, the enemy can still plan, improvise, prepare, and improve their defenses.

A second option is to turn the tables. The enemy packs up all their gear and treasure and leaves the dungeon. The party again needs a hint. Leave the enemy's cook fire going, spill some ale, or keep a pot warm. This would make for a dull session in itself. But the enemy did not simply retreat. They are now enraged and hunting the party.

A third option is to hit the party at home. While the party is taking their time resting and pursuing the adventure, what is happening at their base? An alert enemy may send troops out to gather information about the party. They may be able to gain information by scrying.

Is there a piece of information that can be used, in a fun way, against the party? If the party continues to dawdle, the next foray will be to capture family members, terrorize homes, find or create secret ways into the party's keep or inn, or perhaps plant an assassin close to the party's base.

This would be dull if the party knows nothing about it. But a message comes to inform them. They must either hurry and finish the adventure or return to deal with the situation at home. The second option giving the enemy even more time to rest and prepare.

## 17. Playing Mechanics vs. Roleplaying

*From Dave McKay*

I sense that the problem might be one of his gaming group is playing mechanics rather than characters in an interactive world (even in a dungeon). The following ideas cover a broader spectrum, but I hope in this he will find some answers and solutions.

I have been GMing on and off for over 25 years and have experienced similar situations. The following are some house rules that I apply and that my group happily follows.

1) Focus on roleplaying and not wargaming. It seems Diego's group is maneuvering in the world by the rules. We try to focus on roleplaying the environment. And it is an environment that changes.

My group knows that as they react with my world it reacts back. They have a strong sense of roleplaying and being in-character, and this tends to result in them being driven to get going and accomplish their goals within the game and adventure.

I notice my group tends to press forward in the adventure/session to accomplish their mission. They will exhaust magical resources and yet continue on, somewhat cautiously. Once they are too badly hurt and/or exhausted, then they will retreat to a relatively safe area, within or outside of the adventure site.

Things still happen. The enemy re-groups. They react to the party's previous intrusion, learn from the last encounter. When the party returns, the situation may be more dangerous, the

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enemy somewhat better prepared, or even the quest goal has gone out of reach (usually to be pursued in a new adventure within the campaign). Diego mentions a solution of time limit. My players usually have that developed within character (and that is rooted in their gaming experience). Perhaps develop more of a situational limit rather than time.

2) Bring the situation to life. Be descriptive, be involved. Let the players begin to feel their surroundings. In my campaigns when the party stays at an inn, my verbalizations of the senses will leave a player actually hungry from my description of the fair, of what they smell. This can result in the evening's pizza order.

I bring these same verbalizations and word-picture descriptions into the adventure site. I have players react to the senses of horror, disgust, environmental conditions, and discomfort. The characters are played to how the player feels what I describe.

We did have one player who had a tendency to ignore the conditions. He no longer games with us as there was mutual frustration. He cared not to sense the world in the spirit that we offered it in. He cared mainly for maximizing his character with the mechanics.

I often will have the players make ability and save checks as appropriate to give them a sense of how the character is reacting. In a recent session, the party held up in an abandoned chamber to rest. I had them make checks because the place was not ideal to rest in, and as a result one character suffered temporary ability damage, and the results from the resting were not satisfactory. Less healing and only some spell/magic recovered. There was also a random encounter.

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The party knows they risk less than satisfactory results if they chance resting up in situ, but that it does cost time, provisions, and money should they wish to retreat to more civilized areas.

To summarize, the group will weigh the risks when they make a decision to rest up. They risk the enemy regrouping and making things more difficult, perhaps losing the prize. Their base camp may be at risk if they are resting in situ since they are not there to defend it. In the end, it brings that part of their world a bit more to life for them, and it is ultimately fun in the roleplaying game.

3) The GM is the final authority in the game environment. My players respect that my decisions on any mechanics as applied in the game environment. One of my players is also a GM and the same applies when we are playing in his campaign.

In my latest campaign, I took an idea from Roleplaying Tips and published a Players Reference that I emailed and printed out for my group. It outlines how I am applying certain rules, game resources, conduct, house rules, and meta-gaming.

That in itself has reduced many instances of player's knowledge of game mechanics directing the flow of play.

Some of my decisions have been unpopular with some or even all the players at times, but in the end they respect my rulings and it gives the players a sense of grounding so they can expect consistency from my style and campaign.

We do hold discussion periods, usually before we begin a session, to table ideas, create house rules, and modify mechanics we feel don't work well or are unrealistic. This gives my players a strong

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sense of control for enjoying the game and a sense of value and worth to the group.

As an example, we have been able to create a comprehensive set of house rules for magic and spells that is almost seamless with published d20 material.

My players and I have developed a strong sense of playing verses applying mechanics.

4) I would advise not to be afraid to take some control of your adventure world and have your players experience it as you think it should feel and flow. Give them choices, but if the choices are ones you offer, it keeps things going where you are guiding them. When it comes to character choices, don't be afraid to guide your players into choices that maintain a better mixture (so you don't have all spellcasters).

If the roleplaying element is strong, especially during non-adventure times, your players will become attached to their current character and their play will be driven more by the sense of character rather than game mechanics.

Alter the way you design encounters, or the way that the encounter is written.

Have some lower EL encounters to encourage game flow.

Design more challenging encounters for the more critical points in the adventure. If the party has used up relatively little in spell power in an encounter, they are more likely to carry on into the adventure without stopping to rest.

If the encounter is taxing on the party, they often will want to rest up. Nothing can be more exciting, breathtaking, and edge-of-your-seat satisfying than for the party reaching a challenging encounter somewhat drained in spells and resources where one moment they are winning, then the next they are looking to retreat just to stay alive, and then they finally win through. That's when they deserve to rest. And they will appreciate it as players.

## **18. Three Tips for Over Resting Parties**

*From Scott G*

Trouble the PCs' sleep. Perhaps the land is cursed or an evil deity is harassing the characters in their dreams. In either case, they don't receive their normal bonuses for resting so long as they remain in the troubling location. You could divide your campaign world into restful and non-resting zones depending on where you want the players to not rest and recharge.

Second, use an impatient player character. The next time a player introduces a new character into your campaign, convince her to take a personality flaw like Impatient, Fidgety, or Wanderlust. One of the PC's in a game I played took the flaw of Wanderlust at the maximum degree. He compulsively couldn't spend more than the minimum amount of time in any location, and it kept the party moving forward at a breakneck pace.

Third, set a campaign time-limit, similar to your idea of placing a time limit on an individual adventure, but applied more broadly. I have a couple of examples from my own experience. In an EarthDawn campaign, our party was hired to retrieve a relic from

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a certain city, but a rival group of NPCs was racing us to the same location. Our group had to pace ourselves to not be late.

In another SenZar game, our group was given a period of six months to accomplish everything we needed and wanted to do before the campaign climaxed. The reason was astrological. A celestial ley line convergence with unknown consequences was going to occur six months after the player character met.

There was nothing we could do to stop the convergence, short of moving some planets around, but there was time to prepare and to secure the specific area where we thought the convergence would take place: a monster infested patch of wilderness called Maggot Marsh.

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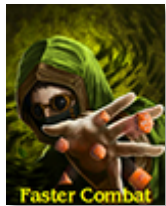
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