

# DUNGEON GRAPPLING



by Douglas H. Cole





# DUNGEON GRAPPLING

## AN RPG SUPPLEMENT FOR GAMES FROM THE OSR THROUGH FIFTH EDITION

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# **INTRODUCTION**



**G**rappling is one of the oldest forms of combat on the planet. It is used by animals when hunting, and is something that both children and animals (and the children of animals) do for play.

And yet, grappling rules, by and large, have not found favor with players. They certainly haven't led to the importance or emphasis that led a noted late 16th century gentleman to say:

*“Of the single rapier fight between valiant men, having both skill, he that is the best wrestler, or if neither of them can wrestle, the strongest man most commonly kills the other, or leaves him at his mercy.”*

— George Silver, *Paradoxes of Defense*

## MAKE IT INTERESTING

Grappling an equal foe should neither be pointless nor an “I win!” button. It has to be as compelling in its place as bashing a guy with a sword or shooting him with an arrow in terms of fight-ending ability, and yet not be a magical nuclear weapon (“I’ve got him in a tentacle lock! The Kraken is so toast!”)

Striking damage rolls are variable; it is not a stretch to have grappling provide a variable effect as well. Not all grapples are created equal, and using dice to provide variability is as old as roleplaying. Even better if you can use the same die roll to put injury and restraint on the same scale.

What outcomes should be available when you slap a quality grapple on a foe?

**THEY’RE EASIER TO HIT.** Their defense target number should get worse as they get grappled more. This is part and parcel with . . .

**THEY’RE CLUMSIER AND RESTRAINED.** When trying to make attacks, the more grappled they are, the higher penalty they should take when swinging weapons and fists.

**THEIR MOVEMENT IS CONSTRAINED.** As they are grappled more and more tightly, they should find it harder and harder to move in a direction they wish to go. As your foe gets you more under his control, he can also move you around against your will.



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**THEY’RE OPEN TO INJURY.** Being grappled invites techniques that translate restraint into actual injury. This gets back to putting injury points and control points on the same basis.

## GRAPPLING IS FOR MONSTERS

Even more than the players, grappling needs to be seen as a useful tool for the GM to make the players’ lives a tetch more interesting than they’d generally like.

Being grabbed by a giant scorpion should be *scary*. A well-crafted set of grappling rules will make for better stories, and will frankly make for more engrossing encounters. A crocodile is *worrisome* because of its bite, of course. But they are terrifying because they bite with more than three tons of force, dragging prey underwater to disorient and drown them with a “death roll.” A lion bites the neck to suffocate its meal, not to make it bleed to death. Cats will strike with their claws, but they will also grapple, wrapping their front paws around their foe and raking with their powerful hind legs—effectively guaranteeing hits without having to make the real-world equivalent of an attack roll. Constrictor snakes are perhaps the archetype for monsters that basically do nothing else *but* grapple until the foe is dead.



Grappling is a great tool for the GM to make giant monsters appropriately fear inducing, and something you don't walk up to casually so that you can start swatting at it with axes. It will ensure an emergent behavior where the very last thing you want to do is be grabbed by a monster built around grappling, and it will shape the encounter behavior in entertaining ways.

*“Enkidu blocked the gate with his foot, not letting Gilgamesh in. Gilgamesh and Enkidu wrestled with one another, locked like bulls; they shattered the doorpost and the wall shook. Gilgamesh bent his knee and with his foot planted on the ground and with a turn Enkidu was thrown. Then immediately his fury died.”*

— *Gilgamesh and Enkidu*  
(Unknown, ~2000 BC)



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*“The lion leaped. Mandorallen flung his steel-cased arms wide and stepped forward to meet the cat’s charge. They came together with a resounding crash, and Mandorallen locked his arms around the beast’s body . . . Mandorallen tightened his deadly embrace. . . With a superhuman effort, Mandorallen jerked his arms together. Ce’Nedra heard the cracking of bones with a sickening clarity, and an enormous fountain of blood erupted from that cat’s mouth. . . Mandorallen unclenched his locked hands, and the dead beast slid limply from his grasp to the ground at his feet.*

*“Mandorallen!” She sang his name. “You are my knight!”*

— *Magician’s Gambit*  
(David Eddings, 1983)

## GRIPPING STORIES

The point of more nuanced grappling rules is to make the stories better. The introduction of valid grappling options for combat increase both player enjoyment and the stories a GM can tell.

The grappling system presented here gives a few simple options if one is playing a retroclone or rules-light system. There should be no impediments to further options if desired, allowing extension to explicit rules for locks and other special moves. More recent game designs, with omnipresent creature statistics and more available native mechanics, are also further expanded.

Grappling rules do not have to suck the fun out of a game. The key is to take rules that are usually well developed and understood, and not fight the base mechanical system when it’s time to grapple. All of this is in service to the story, contributing to a sense of action, excitement, and danger. If the rules get in the way, or if the mechanics do not produce interesting outcomes, then why bother?

Some of the most epic tales ever told—*Beowulf*, *The Broken Sword*, *The Odyssey* and *Iliad*—feature grappling matches at their core. Gripping moments in cinema and fiction frequently revolve around the struggle for control over the only accessible weapon in the room. The first epic story *ever told*, the tale of *Gilgamesh*, saw the titular hero and his rival Enkidu, become friends and co-adventurers after they engaged in a suitably epic grappling match.

**DUNGEON GRAPPLING** gives you tools with which to tell similar stories, whether they be from 2016 BC, or 2016 AD.





# **CORE CONCEPTS**

## **CHAPTER 1**



The rules contained below all break down into a few basic principles, and the first and most important is that grappling actions utilize the same kinds of die rolls and mechanics as primary weapons.

There are three important concepts: The attack roll, the defense target number, and the effect roll.

The details may change depending on the rules of the game being played, but any time a combatant is going to attempt to make a grapple, improve a grapple, or shed a grapple, it will involve these three steps.



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## GRAPPLE DC

When you attack another creature in melee, you are attempting to either strike them with a fist or a weapon to do them injury, grapple them to restrain their movement (and then possibly do them injury), or loose a projectile at them (and do them injury).

When you are attacked by an opponent with an intent to grapple you, your response to that blow may be to dodge out of the way, block it with a shield, parry with a weapon, or any number of other things. These defenses are all abstracted into a target number.

### GRAPPLE DIFFICULTY CLASS

Throughout the rest of the book, the target number that must be met or exceeded will be referred to as the Grappling Difficulty Class, or *Grapple DC*. It is, in principle, Armor Class for grabs.

There are many possibilities for how games present information regarding foes—some may have only the barest of details, while others will provide a comprehensive stat block. The Grapple DC can incorporate many different sources of character

### HOW TO GRAPPLE: THE BASICS

Grappling can be visualized as being as intricate as an aikido-like parry and takedown, or as simple and brutal as a crocodile's inescapable bite. In all cases, they are abstracted and resolved with the same mechanics.

To resolve establishing a grapple, follow these steps:

1. **ROLL TO HIT.** Make a grappling attack roll against the target's Grapple DC. If successful, you have successfully grasped your opponent.
2. **ROLL DAMAGE.** Roll and apply control points to the target, and keep a tally of how many have been scored.
3. **ASSESS EFFECTS.** The effects suffered when grappled depend on the quality of the grapple. Compare the current total of applied control points vs the target's Control Maximum, and apply the effects shown on the Control Point Effects table.

differentiation, primarily from ability scores, class features, level bonuses or proficiency, and skills.

There is no reason to use the exact same method for player characters and monsters. Each player is responsible for their own character, while the GM gets to manage *all* the monsters. Do what you need to keep the game flowing!

### CALCULATING GRAPPLE DC

The basic value of the Grapple DC can vary depending on the game rules in use. The preference is to take the best of values considering Strength or Dexterity, and add a factor corresponding to a creature's experience.

### SWORDS AND WIZARDRY

Calculate the Grapple DC as follows:

$$\text{GRAPPLE DC (BASIC)} = \text{IO} + \text{ATTACK BONUS} + \text{STRENGTH OR DEXTERITY BONUS} + \text{CLASS FEATURES}$$

**ATTACK BONUS.** Look at the character's level or Hit Dice on the appropriate attack table, and compare the target number difference to that of a first level, or 1 HD, monster.



**STRENGTH OR DEXTERITY BONUS.** Use the best of the Strength or Dexterity bonuses.

**CLASS FEATURES.** Account for class features such as a Monk's Armor Class bonus or similar abilities.

Note that this formula is for *characters*, for whom this information is always available. For *monsters*, see Monstrous Grappling.

Examples: A 7th-level Fighter might have a target number of 6 to hit a certain AC, while a 1st-level fighter hits that same AC with a target number of 10; the attack bonus is thus +4. The same fighter's Strength is 17, good for a +2 bonus, while Dexterity is 15, good for +1—the better of the two is +2 from Strength. The game also gives foes a -2 to hit due to the high dexterity, but since this applies to *all* attacks, it should not be included in Grapple DC. The fighter's final Grapple DC is  $10 + 4 + 2 = 16$ .

A 7th-level Monk with Strength 11 and Dexterity 13 gets a +6 to ascending AC to account for being an expertly trained martial artist, which should include skill at grappling. Combined with a +1 bonus for good Dexterity, and a +3 attack bonus due to level, gives the Monk Grapple DC 20, making her a very tough target to grapple.

## DESCENDING GRAPPLE DC

(SWORDS & WIZARDRY)

*Some systems that use descending AC are played by resolving each attack by looking up the attacker's level cross-referenced with the defender's AC. To convert the ascending Grapple DC into an equivalent, use the following construction:*

**DESCENDING GRAPPLE DC = 9 - [BEST OF STRENGTH OR DEXTERITY BONUS + OTHER BONUSES]**

*The impact of Hit Dice/Character Level is included in the table. In the above examples, the fighter's Descending Grapple DC would be 7. The Monk's +1 Dexterity bonus would give Descending Grapple DC 8, but modified down to a descending Grapple DC 2 thanks to the martial arts training.*

## THE PATHFINDER ROLEPLAYING GAME

The PFRPG Grapple DC is based on the Combat Maneuver Defense:

**GRAPPLE DC (PATHFINDER RPG) = CMD + SPECIAL ABILITIES**

**CMD.** The Combat Maneuver Defense is calculated using the Basic Attack Bonus plus the sum of both Strength and Dexterity Bonuses.

**SPECIAL ABILITIES.** Grappling-related special abilities (feats, abilities, and class features called out as impacting grapples) should also modify the Grapple DC.

## FIFTH EDITION

Calculate the Grapple DC for Fifth Edition as follows:

**GRAPPLE DC (FIFTH EDITION) = 10 + ATHLETICS OR ACROBATICS BONUS + SPECIAL ABILITIES**

**ATHLETICS OR ACROBATICS BONUS.** The bonus defaults to the STR or DEX bonus, plus the character's proficiency if applicable.

**SPECIAL ABILITIES.** Any special abilities granted by class, racial features, or feats also modify Grapple DC.

## ENHANCED DEX BONUSES

(SWORDS & WIZARDRY)

*In some OSR systems, the Dexterity contribution to Armor Class is minimal: no more than  $\pm 1$ . For grappling, you can use the Strength table for fighters to calculate improvements to Grapple DC, so a Dexterity 18 'would provide a +3 instead. This might stomp on a fighter's defensive fighting gift, or a monk's AC/Grapple DC bonus, so choose carefully.*

## LIMITED ACROBATICS

(FIFTH EDITION)

*Always using the best of Athletics or Acrobatics plays to the concept that agility is as good as strength when avoiding (or making) grapples. Another way to look at it is to only allow the Acrobatics score to be used as the Grapple DC when avoiding an attempt to establish a grapple. Once contact has been made (control points have been scored), the grapple DC is based on the skill used to make grapples: Athletics. This will emphasize strength over agility when actually wrestling.*



## CLASS FEATURES AND FEATS

Sometimes particular classes are given special abilities when fighting. These class bonuses are frequently given to Monks and similar roles that have a “martial arts master” feel to them. This bonus might also be based on a non-traditional attribute (such as Wisdom or Constitution).

These abilities represent specialized training or capability, and are added to the Grapple DC. This will make Barbarians and Monks (in Fifth Edition) superior grapplers based on their Unarmored Defense class abilities. This is probably a feature, not a bug.

Some classes—again, Monks come to mind—might also receive bonuses to grappling as part of abilities granted upon reaching a certain level.

The last way to get good at grappling—or defending against it—is to take an appropriate customization option, such as a feat. The example feats provided in the appropriate section in **DUNGEON GRAPPLING** do not increase the Grapple DC, but granting such bonuses would be right in line with the mission for feats.

# GRAPPLING ATTACKS

When using **DUNGEON GRAPPLING**, all grapples are resolved with attack and damage rolls, not a contested check of Strength or Dexterity:

$$\text{ATTACK ROLL} = 1\text{D}20 + \text{STRENGTH BONUS} + \text{PROFICIENCY/LEVEL BONUS}$$

**STRENGTH BONUS.** As with other melee attacks, the strength bonus contributes to the attack roll.

**PROFICIENCY/LEVEL BONUS.** Depending on the game system, the hit roll is boosted by a factor accounting for experience. This is the proficiency bonus in 5e and the PFRPG, and for S&W is found by subtracting the target number for the character's level from the target number for a 1st level character of that class.

**CMB.** In the Pathfinder Roleplaying Game, the combination of Strength Bonus + Proficiency is the Combat Maneuver Bonus, or CMB.

If your attack roll meets or exceeds the Grapple DC, you've hit your target with a grappling attack. That entitles you to an effect of some sort: Roll for damage as control points.

**DUNGEON GRAPPLING** will give preference to Strength bonuses over Dexterity bonuses where it comes to grappling attacks. While there are places where skill and agility have great impact in grappling, by and large, it is *always* better to be stronger than the other guy. Skill may act as an enhancement to strength, but a skilled weakling is still in deep trouble if trapped under (or grappled by) someone heavy, especially

if that opposing grappler has any skill whatsoever. Special abilities can give precedence to Dexterity in lieu of Strength in some systems—The Pathfinder Roleplaying Game's Agile Maneuvers feat comes to mind.

As with the defensive target numbers, the precise nature of what modifiers are brought to bear changes depending on the situation. The Strength bonus, if any, will nearly always come into play. There may be additional bonuses representing skill and experience, sometimes represented explicitly (through training in a grappling skill), sometimes given by reductions in target number as a function of level, Hit Dice, class, or a combination of all of these.

**MULTIPLE ATTACKS.** Certain classes may attack multiple times, such as a monk using open hands, or a high-level fighter versus low-HD foes. In any case, grappling attacks may be substituted for any appropriate attack one-for-one.

**CRITICAL HITS.** If the system being played has rules for critical hits—double damage, maximum damage, roll the dice of damage twice and then add modifiers, or any other method—these apply to control point rolls as well.

**GRAPPLING AND CONSEQUENCES.** Attempting to grapple a foe can be risky, because you expose yourself to counter-strikes as you attempt to get a grip. An attack made to *establish* a grapple against a foe provokes an opportunity attack if those are available in the game.



This attack may be a strike or a grapple, and may be armed (does normal weapon damage) or unarmed (may grapple with one or more free hands, or strike).

Innate or natural attacks, such as monsters trying to grapple with a bite or hook their target with a grappling claw, *will not* provoke the opportunity attack. (This is as much or more a nod to speed and continuity of play than “realism.”)

If the grappling attack is made to *follow-up* on contact already established by the attacker—the attack is to *increase* rather than *establish* control points—an opportunity attack is *not* triggered. The extra attack represents the chance that the defender will interpose a weapon, lash out with a fist or knee, or “defend” with an aggressive grapple defense such as a sprawl or guillotine.

**CLEAVES AND GRAPPLING.** If using a cleave-like system where killing a foe allows another attack, a fighter who incapacitates his foes with a grappling attack may cleave by “sweeping up.” Roll another grappling attack against a separate creature within reach. If that attack also rolls control in excess of the target’s Control Maximum, then continue making additional attacks until you elect either to stop or find a foe you can’t incapacitate in one blow. A very powerful monster or combatant might be able to sweep up a number of foes into his or her grasp!



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## STATISTICS AND MECHANICS

The addition of options—be they skills, feats, proficiencies, or generic combat maneuvers—to provide character differentiation and specialization comes with terms and concepts that tie the mechanics and the character statistics together.

Some of the more common and important basic concepts and mechanics are discussed below, to allow for common reference when discussing grappling rules.

### ABILITY AND SKILL CHECKS

As character differentiation was added via the concept of skills, proficiencies, feats, and similar boosts, a mechanic similar to an attack roll was added to cover such tests. The GM decides which of the six abilities is relevant to the task at hand and the difficulty of the task, represented by a Difficulty Class—in **DUNGEON GRAPPLING** that is almost always the Grapple DC.

To make an ability check, roll a d20 and add the relevant ability modifier. As with other d20 rolls, apply bonuses and penalties, and compare the total to the DC. If the total equals or exceeds the DC, the ability check is a success—the creature overcomes the challenge at hand. Otherwise, it’s a failure, which means the character or monster makes no progress toward the objective or makes progress combined with a setback determined by the GM.

### PROFICIENCY AND BASIC ATTACK BONUS

Characters and monsters are given a bonus to attack based on their experience level. The bonus is used in the rules on ability checks, saving throws, and attack rolls.

Various versions of the game use different names and magnitudes for this value. Some might add the character’s level directly (similar to the monster’s +1 to hit for every HD, found in the Basic version of the rules). Others (such as the PFRPG) use a Basic Attack Bonus progression based on class, while Fifth Edition’s proficiency bonuses are much smaller and independent of class.

So long as the character’s and monster’s proficiency bonuses are using the same scale, the effects should work out well enough, as this same bonus is also added to the Grapple DC. This ensures two relatively



equally threatening foes remain well matched even as their *absolute* experience levels change.

Proficiency-type bonuses can't be added to a single die roll or other number more than once. For example, if two different rules say you can add your proficiency bonus to a contest of Strength, you nevertheless add the bonus only once when you make the roll. More generally, if there are multiple bonuses of different types, you only get the best of each type.

## ADVANTAGE AND DISADVANTAGE

Sometimes—in Fifth Edition—a special ability or spell tells you that you have advantage or disadvantage on an ability check, saving throw, or attack roll. When that happens, you roll a second d20 when you make the roll. Use the higher of the two rolls if you have advantage, and use the lower roll if you have disadvantage. For example, if you have disadvantage and roll a 17 and a 5, you use the 5. If you instead have advantage and roll those numbers, you use the 17.

The benefits of this mechanic are its simplicity and universality. It provides the equivalent of a  $\pm 5$  to the roll when the net target number is in the range of 8–14, but choosing the best die prevents bonus/modifier creep. It is fast to resolve and easy to remember. It is also very easy to export into other games.

If multiple situations affect a roll and each one grants advantage or imposes disadvantage on it,

you don't roll more than one additional d20. If two favorable situations grant advantage, for example, you still roll only one additional d20.

If circumstances cause a roll to have both advantage and disadvantage, they “cancel out,” and you only roll one d20. This is true even if multiple circumstances impose disadvantage and only one grants advantage or vice versa. In such a situation, you have neither advantage nor disadvantage.

In systems that embrace numerous bonuses to both the hit roll and target number, each instance of advantage or disadvantage found in the rules could be treated as a +5 (for advantage) or -5 (for disadvantage). The Pathfinder Roleplaying Game has many cases where a +2 bonus can be obtained, and frequently they stack so long as they are not the same bonus type. Since the bonus conferred by advantage/disadvantage is much larger, the guidance that multiple cases of advantage do not stack should be adhered to when porting the concept to that game. Alternately, each instance of advantage might only provide  $\pm 2$ , but be allowed to stack so long as each instance comes from a different type of source.

In basic versions of the game, where Strength 18 is both the highest value typically attainable by a human and carries (for a fighter) a +3 bonus, it may be wise to adjudicate advantage as providing a +3 bonus, while disadvantage confers a -3 penalty.



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## CONTESTS

Sometimes two creatures' actions are in direct conflict, and only one can succeed. For example, when a monster tries to force open a door that an adventurer is holding closed, or when a creature is trying to drag, throw, or otherwise compel another creature to do something that will be actively resisted. In situations like these, the outcome may be determined by a special form of ability check, called a contest.

Both participants in a contest make appropriate ability checks, applying all appropriate bonuses and penalties. Compare the two rolls: The participant with the higher check total wins the contest. That character or monster either succeeds at the action or prevents the other one from succeeding.

If the contest results in a tie, the situation remains the same as it was before the contest. So if a contest were to be used to determine if a combatant can drag a resisting monster across the room, a tie would mean that the monster remains in place.

## MODIFIED GRAPPLER (5E)

The Grappler feat should be altered when using the rules in **DUNGEON GRAPPLING**.

- ♥ You have advantage when you use your action to make an attack roll against a creature whom you have grabbed or better.
- ♥ You can use a bonus action to make an additional grappling attack against a creature you have at least grabbed; you do not gain your attribute bonus for control damage on this attack.

## NEW 5E FEATS

While everyone gets better as they gain levels, it is possible to add further customization through the selection of feats. These "power-ups" usually allow a character to selectively ignore penalties that others usually take in the same situation, provide a bonus to a restricted action, or allow a rule to be "broken" in a minor way.

The feats below are a few examples of grappling-specific feats, which make grappling attacks more effective. They are designed for Fifth Edition, but could serve as examples for grappling-specific abilities for other rules.

## DUNGEON SPRAWL (5E)

You've perfected your defensive reflexes when someone tries to *establish* a grapple. It has no effect on existing grapples.

When a foe attempts to first grapple you, choose *one* of the following benefits:

- ♥ You have advantage on attack rolls during your opportunity attack when a creature attempts to establish a grapple on you.
- ♥ The grapple attempt has disadvantage.

You may spend your reaction to *also* get the benefit that you did not select—this must be declared before the opportunity attack by you on your attacker is resolved.

## WEAPON GRAPPLER (5E)

You are adept at grappling while wielding larger weapons than most.

- ♥ You only suffer disadvantage (or an appropriate penalty) when performing a melee strike while grappled if your weapon has the Heavy or Reach properties.
- ♥ You do not suffer disadvantage (or an appropriate penalty) when using a reach weapon to grapple.
- ♥ Opportunity attacks on you provoked when you try and make the initial grappling attack on an armed opponent have disadvantage (or an appropriate penalty).

## WRESTLING MASTER (5E)

You are adept at grappling and close-quarter physical combat.

### PREREQUISITE: STRENGTH 13+

- ♥ You have advantage (or an appropriate bonus) if you are making a grappling attack against a foe but have not yet achieved any Control.
- ♥ If you have a creature grappled, and they attempt to counter-grapple—to either reduce control or establish control on you—you may use your reaction to reduce their effect. Roll your normal grappling damage, halve it, and reduce the control damage of your foe's attack by that amount.
- ♥ Foes larger than you are treated as one size class smaller when grappling.



## INTERPRETING PFRPG FEATS

The Pathfinder Roleplaying Game has many feats that deal with grappling, and some may benefit from altered interpretation when using **DUNGEON GRAPPLING**.

**ATTACK BONUSES.** Feats that provide attack bonuses should retain those bonuses, adding to attack rolls.

**COMBINED ATTACKS.** Some feats allow a combined grapple with another type of melee strike; such feats will simply do as much control damage as they do weapon damage as an automatic effect.

**CONTROLLING ATTRIBUTE.** The basic attribute that is assumed to be used to grapple is Strength. Some feats allow replacing Strength with Dexterity for certain calculations, and that would occur for grappling as well.

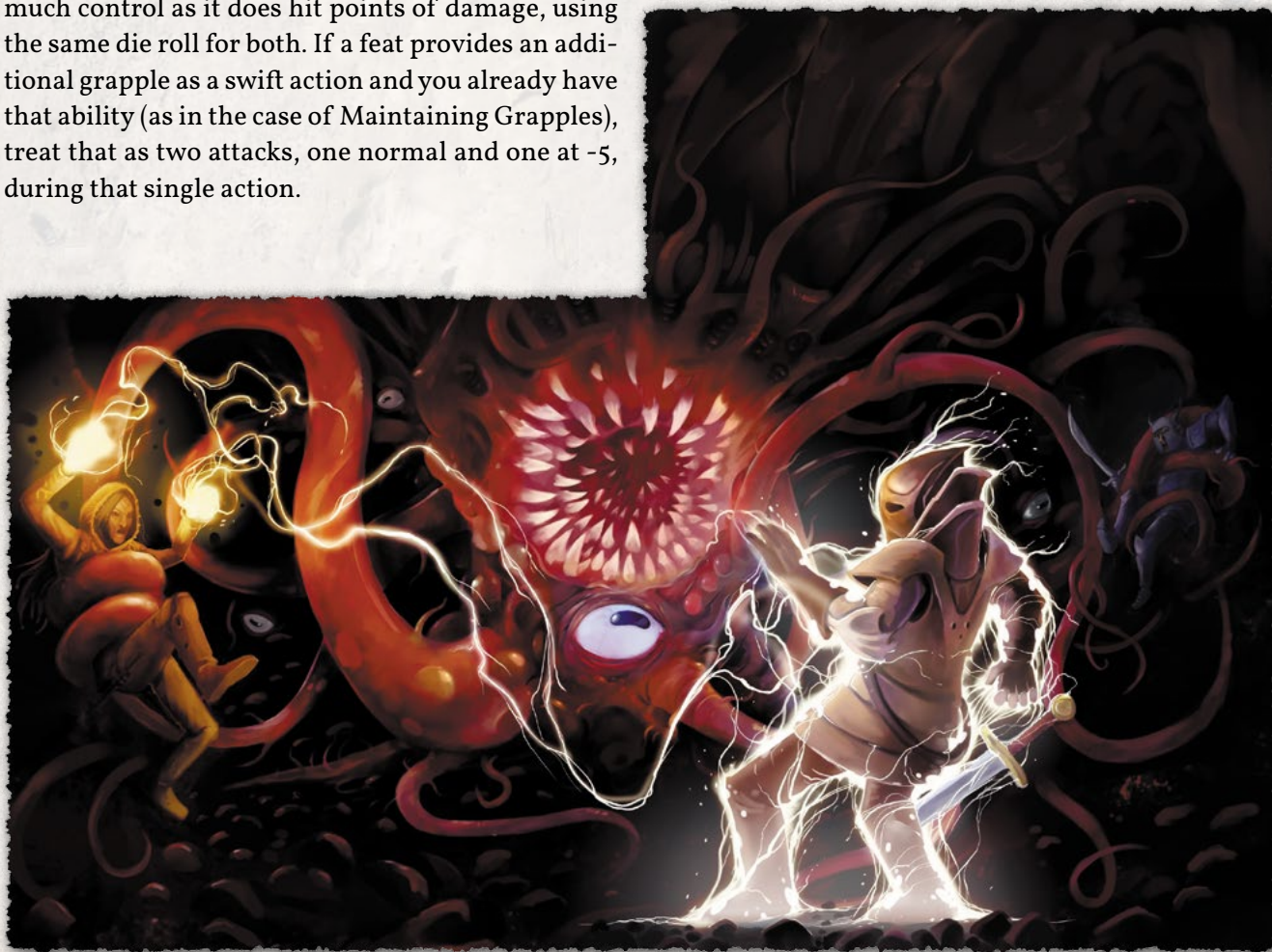
**EXTRA GRAPPLES.** An ability, such as Grab, that adds a grapple to another attack should inflict as much control as it does hit points of damage, using the same die roll for both. If a feat provides an additional grapple as a swift action and you already have that ability (as in the case of Maintaining Grapples), treat that as two attacks, one normal and one at -5, during that single action.

**MAINTAINING GRAPPLES.** In the base game, the grappled condition must be maintained each turn; in **DUNGEON GRAPPLING**, the grapple is maintained until you release it or your foe breaks free. Any feat that normally allows you to freely maintain a grapple will instead allow you to use a swift action to increase control.

**SPECIAL ATTACKS.** If a feat allows you to make a special attack, such as attempting to break a foe's neck, treat this as a weapon attack, and allow adding control points to boost the effect, as per striking.

**TRIPS.** Some feats allow you to attempt to trip your foe. A Trip knocks your foe prone; treat as a shove using these rules, or resolve normally using the core rules.

**WEAPON OR DAMAGE SIZE.** Feats that increase the size class of a weapon or attack will increase the control damage as well, using the usual progression used in the game rules.



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# EFFECT ROLLS

The usual result of a successful *melee* attack is a damage roll, which reduces the target's fighting endurance by reducing the target's hit points. Similarly, **DUNGEON GRAPPLING** provides results by instituting a similar principle—the *control point (CP)* roll, with CP incrementing *up* from zero. Another way to describe control points is that the damage *type* for a grappling attack is *control* damage.

Control points represent increased restraint and potential for injury. Since they are based on the same die types and magnitude as normal damage rolls, methods of converting control to injury become straight-forward and intuitive.

While every character and monster in the game has hit points, some systems give more-or-less identical monsters a lot more of them. So while it would be nice to use HP as a basis for generating the effects of a grapple for all systems, that doesn't work well. See the notes in the Grappling Effects chapter to determine the comparison statistic to use in your game.

## CONTROL POINT ROLLS

The effectiveness of a grappling attack is measured by the number of control points it inflicts. Each character rolls for control points based on the hit die type used in their character class. Monsters use a similar concept, detailed in the chapter on Monstrous Grappling.

Since the more militant character classes naturally tend to have higher Hit Die types (for example, Fighters might get a d10, while a Wizard gets a d6), this serves as a useful proxy for the set of skills and training that comes along with the class. When considering NPCs, assign them a low base control point roll of 1d4 or 1d6 unless they are members of a vaguely combative profession. Entertainers might only get 1d4 or 1d6 as a base control point roll, but a bouncer or conscripted militia might have a base of 1d6 or 1d8.

No matter what the basic die type, always add the Strength bonus of the attacker to the control point roll.

This is much more than the unarmed combat damage most systems allow, but humans are natural grapplers and only middling strikers: thumbled hands are great for holding on and only so-so for punching! Monks may substitute or add their unarmed striking damage as appropriate for the system; ensure that the martial-arts-enhanced damage dice rolled are superior to some random civilian engaging in a grappling match.

**Example:** Using a basic system, an entertainer NPC might only roll 1d4 plus Strength bonuses for grappling control damage. A Monk in that same system has a hit die type of d4, but the unarmed combat damage scales up rapidly with level. In this case, the GM decides substituting that damage for the hit die type is the best decision.

In a different system, most civilians get 1d6 control point rolls, but the Monk gets a d8 for Hit Dice and the "martial arts" damage is a d4. This is a case where the two damage dice should be added, and the Monk would roll 1d8+1d4+Strength bonus for control points.

**ONE-HANDED GRAPPLING.** If for whatever reason a grappler wishes to leave a hand free (say, to stab with an off-hand dagger), no problem. Roll grappling attacks normally, but when applying damage as control, first roll any appropriate dice, and then halve them (rounded down).

Attacks to counter-grapple someone that is grappling you with only one hand have advantage on the roll, or are at +5 to hit.

Some feats might allow you to bypass this restriction, giving full control for a one-handed grapple or denying advantage when counter-grappled.

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The background of the page is a faint, hand-drawn map of a dungeon. The map is drawn on a grid and features various rooms, corridors, and traps. In the upper left, there is a circular room containing a spider. The map is rendered in a sketchy, hand-drawn style with grey lines on a light beige background.

# **GRAPPLING EFFECTS**

## **CHAPTER 2**



**C**ombat has to end sometime, and the goal is usually to bring it to a close quickly, expending as few resources as can be managed. Combat with weapons usually will end when one side either decides they've had quite enough and runs away (a morale failure), or is beaten down to the point of unconsciousness or death.

Grappling fights aren't that different, and can usually be counted on to end in a few general outcomes.

**IMMOBILITY.** The most usual end of a grappling fight is to render the foe incapable of movement or action. In these rules, this will be achieved by racking up so much control that the foe can't attack, move, or defend against attacks.

**DELAY OR ESCAPE.** Not all fights go the players' way, and sometimes the goal might be to throw the opponent off balance enough so that the characters can get a running start to get away! Also, if lethal intent is not in the cards, it may be useful to spend a few rounds grappling while the thief is busy with her lockpicks.

**SUBMISSION.** One of the unique properties of grappling is that by forcing an opponent's limbs to the limits of what is physiologically allowable—or a bit beyond—one can induce pain without much permanent damage. Enough of this can force a morale check, or simply cause the foe to give up.

**INJURY AND DEATH.** Beyond the realm of pain lies actual damage, often crippling. One can convert control to injury, eventually to the point of death. As noted elsewhere in the book, this is frequently less effective than an axe to the skull, but more efficient than trading blows in unarmed combat.



Art by Gennifer Bone



# CONTROL AND CONSEQUENCES

The basic control point mechanic introduced in the previous chapter provides a method for resolving grapples using something that intentionally mimics rolling and accounting for damage from a melee strike. What it gains in mechanical symmetry, though, it loses in bookkeeping.

As soon as a hit is scored on a grappling attack, the target takes damage as control, and if at least one control point is inflicted, the target will begin to suffer some consequences.

There's a lot of merit to a condition-based approach from the standpoint of GM sanity. It's very easy to tick a box on a GM control sheet that indicates: "this creature is now screwed." It allows fast description and summary of a set of effects brought about by achieving a certain control point total. For this reason, even when describing effects using a rules-light approach, the conditional terms will be used as descriptor.

As soon as at least one control point is inflicted on a target, the creature gains (at least) the *grabbled* condition. Control is kept distinct from hit points, and is accounted for separately. Control is counted up from zero instead of down from a maximum as with hit points. Control points measure the degree of impairment of motion that a grappled or grappling character is suffering.



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As further hits are scored, increases in control will eventually be reflected in the grappled character gaining additional conditions, from grabbed, to grappled, restrained, and incapacitated. Consult the Control Point Effects table to adjudicate the effects of a grapple.

## CONTROL MAXIMUM (CM)

A creature's control point maximum (CM) tells you how much restraint can be applied to the creature without it becoming incapacitated and helpless.

### BASIC (S&W/OSR) CONTROL MAXIMUM

In early rules, the number of Hit Dice and hit points even for powerful creatures were lower. For these systems, even the size class of a creature is not always known—but sometimes it is. Calculate the Control Maximum using any or all of the following methods, and choose which is the most appealing.

**HIT POINTS.** For simplicity, set the Control Maximum equal to hit points. This is one of the better methods when size class is not known, and Hit Dice/hit points are the only information provided.

**HIT DICE/SIZE MODIFIER.** A creature's Hit Dice are always provided, while size class is not. Consider the following two approaches

**CONTROL MAXIMUM = 10 + 5 × HIT DICE (IF SIZE CLASS IS NOT KNOWN)**

OR

**CONTROL MAXIMUM = [10 + 3 × HIT DICE] × CM MODIFIER (IF SIZE CLASS IS KNOWN).**

You can find the Control Point Maximum modifier on the Size Adjustment table (see Chapter IV).

### FIFTH EDITION CONTROL MAXIMUM

The full stat blocks make the Control Maximum easier to calculate.

First either look up the creature's Proficiency bonus, or calculate it (subtract the best of the Strength or



Dexterity bonus from the melee attack bonus; you can also look it up in some reference material as a function of Challenge rating).

$$\text{CONTROL MAXIMUM} = [\text{STRENGTH SCORE} + \text{DEXTERITY BONUS} + 2 \times \text{PROFICIENCY BONUS}] \times \text{CM MODIFIER}$$

## PFRPG CONTROL MAXIMUM

Most creatures will calculate Control Maximum as follows:

$$\text{CONTROL MAXIMUM} = [\text{STRENGTH SCORE} + \text{DEXTERITY BONUS} + \text{HALF OF BAB}] \times \text{CM MODIFIER}$$

Creatures with the Agile Maneuvers feat will instead use

$$\text{CONTROL MAXIMUM} = [\text{STRENGTH BONUS} + \text{DEXTERITY SCORE} + \text{HALF OF BAB}] \times \text{CM MODIFIER}$$

## CONTROL POINT EFFECTS

Once the Control Maximum is known, it should be treated like the creature's maximum hit points, or ability scores, for the most part. Things that increase hit rolls or situational attack or defense modifiers do not generally increase the Control Maximum.

Abilities that directly alter Strength or Dexterity, drain levels, or otherwise lower Hit Dice, proficiency bonus, or basic attack bonus *do* change the Control Maximum.

Thus a Barbarian that gains Strength when raging will have its Control Maximum go up, while a creature whose level is lowered by the effect of the kiss of a succubus may have lowered resistance to grappling effects in the form of a lower Control Maximum as well.

Consult the Control Point Effects table, once the CM is known, to determine the effects of a grapple.

♥ **CP INFLICTED ON FOE.** So long as at least one control point has been inflicted on a foe, that foe is grabbed. Once you pass the upper limit of grabbed, the foe becomes grappled, and so on.

♥ **CONDITION.** If using Conditions instead of the penalties listed in the other columns, the relevant condition is listed. The effects for a given condition may be considered to overwrite any of the penalties given on the table. The condition definitions are found at the end of the chapter, broken out by system.

♥ **ATTACK PENALTY.** A grappled creature's attacks are less well-aimed, as the grapple interferes with coordination.

♥ **AC AND GRAPPLE DC PENALTY.** A grappled creature is easier to hit in general, including additional grapples.

♥ **MOVE.** Being grappled interferes with your ability to move freely. Creatures capable of "full" or "half" move must still successfully make the rolls for flinging or dragging their opponent(s) with them in order to move.

♥ **MISCAST SPELL.** Magic-users hate it when you grab their face and try and pull it off: it messes up their mojo. If they are incapacitated, they may not cast. If they are grappled for less than their CM, they may make the attempt—roll 1d6, and if the result is within the range shown on the chart, the spell is miscast, and the spell slot lost. If the system in use supports a check to maintain Concentration, use that instead!

## CONTROL POINT EFFECTS TABLE

CP INFLICTED UP TO	CONDITION	ATTACK PENALTY	AC/GRAPPLE DC PENALTY	MOVE	MISCAST SPELL
1/5 Control Maximum	Grabbed	–	–	Full	1-2
1/2 Control Maximum	Grappled	-2	-2	Half	1-3
Control Maximum	Restrained	-5	-5	None	1-5
Greater than CM	Incapacitated	No attack	–	None	No



A creature that is grappled to the point of being incapacitated may not attack (nor do damage), make many types of saving throws, and is attacked as a stationary inanimate object (though may be subject to protection from the attacking grappler as cover).

When making saving throws, any action that might encompass voluntary motion is prohibited. So a saving throw to avoid dragon's breath is right out, but a save to resist the venom of a giant spider would still be allowed.

## GRAPPLING IS MUTUAL

Grappling can result in the attacker being impaired as well as his foes. First take the sum of control points inflicted by all grapples *on you*, and determine the resulting effects. Then sum up the total control points you are inflicting on *other* creatures, and compare that to the Attacking Grappler Effects table, which may impact the grappler, though usually to a lesser extent than his foe. As the attacker, you suffer the worst condition applied by the two possibilities.

## ATTACKING GRAPPLER EFFECTS TABLE

TOTAL CP APPLIED TO FOES	CONDITION
Up to 1/2 Control Maximum	Grabbed
Up to Control Maximum	Grappled
Greater than CM	Restrained



# INSTANT CONDITIONS

As noted, while rolling for control points provides a degree of unification with the regular melee striking rules as well as giving a degree of variability to grapples that also has a correspondence with weapon attacks, it pays for that narrative ability with the need to keep track of control points as a separate value.

The "Instant Conditions" concept presented below does away with the effect roll for grappling, and proceeds directly to effects. This is the only method in the book that does not use control points.

To use Instant Conditions, either make a grappling attack roll on the intended victim, or attack to counter-grapple. Both attack types use the same Grapple DC.

Each successful grappling attack moves the victim to a more serious condition. A successful attack to break free lowers your own condition level, or grapples the foe and increases his condition level.

The conditions, in order of increasing severity, are:

**CLINCHED < HINDERED < PINNED < HELPLESS**

In addition, one or both of the combatants can also be prone.

## INSTANT CONDITION DESCRIPTIONS

The Instant Conditions are described below. Grappling a foe impacts both the attacker and the opponent, enumerated as noted. While the impacts are always worse for the person on the receiving end of a grapple than the one doing the grappling, immobilizing an opponent via grappling has a tendency to open up the grappler to being curbed-stomped by the opponent's friends. Be wary of surrounding foes!

If during a fight, multiple conditions apply (you have your foe hindered, but he has you Clinched), use the worst case for each fighter. Prone is a special case, and is additive with any other conditions that apply.



## CLINCHED (GRABBED)

If a creature has been clinched, the following impairments apply:

- ♥ They make attacks at -2 to hit
- ♥ They may be targeted by attacks at +2
- ♥ They may not move without first breaking free

The following restrictions apply to the combatant who is placing a foe into the clinched condition:

- ♥ They may not move without either letting go, or forcibly dragging their foe with them

## HINDERED (GRAPPLED)

If a creature's condition has increased to hindered, the following impairments apply:

- ♥ They make attacks at -5 to hit
- ♥ They are at -5 to Dexterity-based saving throws
- ♥ They may be targeted by attacks at +5
- ♥ They may not move without first breaking free

The following restrictions apply to the combatant who is placing a foe into the hindered condition:

- ♥ They may be targeted by attacks at +2
- ♥ They are at -2 to Dexterity-based saving throws, but may let go to avoid this penalty
- ♥ They may not move without either letting go, or forcibly dragging their foe with them

## PINNED (RESTRAINED)

If a creature's condition has increased to pinned, the following impairments apply:

- ♥ They make attacks at -10 to hit
- ♥ They automatically fail Dexterity-based saving throws
- ♥ They may be targeted by attacks at +5
- ♥ Their only allowed action is to attack to break free

The following restrictions apply to the combatant who is placing a foe into the pinned condition:

- ♥ They may be targeted by attacks at +5
- ♥ They are at -5 to Dexterity-based saving throws, but may let go to avoid this penalty
- ♥ They may not move without letting go

## HELPLESS (INCAPACITATED)

If a creature's condition has increased to helpless, the following impairments apply:

- ♥ No actions at all may be taken, not even speech unless the grappler applying the incapacitating condition allows it

The following restrictions apply to the combatant who is placing a foe into the helpless condition:

- ♥ They may be targeted by attacks at +5
- ♥ They automatically fail Dexterity-based saving throws, but may let go to avoid this penalty
- ♥ They may not move without letting go

## PRONE

If a creature's condition includes prone, the following impairments apply:

- ♥ They make attacks at -2 to hit
- ♥ They are at -2 to Dexterity-based saving throws
- ♥ They are targeted by ranged attacks at -2 to hit
- ♥ They may be targeted by melee attacks at +2 to hit
- ♥ Damage by melee attacks against them increases by 1 die type (from 1 point to 1d4, from 1d8 to 1d10, etc. Weapons or attacks that do damage with d12s add +1 damage per die—a 2d12 attack increases to 2d12+2).



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# FIFTH EDITION CONDITIONS

As noted, the concept of “conditions” is too useful to pass up. It provides a convenient shorthand describing the results of a grapple or a grappling technique, such as a takedown or stunning throw. Some grappling-specific notes have been added to some of the conditions, which may be implemented or ignored at the GM’s discretion.

## GRABBED

- A grabbed creature may not move without flinging or dragging its opponent with them, but is not otherwise restricted.
- A grabbed creature may use its reaction to attempt to break free using a Brute Defense.
- The condition ends if the grappler is incapacitated or lets go.
- The condition also ends if an effect removes the grappled creature from the reach of the grappler or grappling effect, such as teleportation or being knocked away by a concussive effect.

## GRAPPLED

- A grappled creature’s speed is halved, and it can’t benefit from any bonus to its speed. A creature that is grappled may not move without flinging or dragging its opponent along.
- The condition ends if the grappler is incapacitated, or if an effect (such as being knocked back) removes the grappled creature from the reach of the grappler or grappling effect.
- The grappled creature loses the ability to employ their reaction, including opportunity attacks (subject to the GM’s judgment).



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## INCAPACITATED

- An incapacitated creature can’t take actions or reactions.
- An incapacitated creature cannot make rolls to resist being picked up and carried as encumbrance; for many purposes they will be treated as an object rather than a character!
- If the incapacitated creature is grappled, it may not even speak if the grappling creature can reasonably cover its mouth, precluding any spells with a verbal component.

## PRONE

- A prone creature’s only movement option is to crawl, unless it stands up and thereby ends the condition.
- The creature has disadvantage when making attack rolls.
- An attack roll against the creature has advantage if the attacker is within melee attack range of the creature. Otherwise, the attack roll has disadvantage. (This means it’s usually easier to hit with a melee attack, but harder to hit with a ranged weapon attack.)

## STUNNED

- A stunned creature is incapacitated (see the condition), and can speak only falteringly.
- A creature may recover from being Stunned by making a DC 15 Constitution save; it may make an attempt at the beginning of each of its turns.

## RESTRAINED

- A restrained creature’s speed becomes 0, and it can’t benefit from any bonus to its speed.
- Attack rolls against the creature have advantage, and the creature’s attack rolls have disadvantage.
- The creature has disadvantage on Strength and Dexterity saving throws.



# PFRPG CONDITIONS

The Pathfinder Roleplaying Game uses some slightly different terminology for certain conditions, which is noted in the title of each condition.

## **GRABBED (MODIFIED FROM ENTANGLED)**

The character has been gripped by a foe, but is not terribly restricted. Being grabbed impedes movement, but does not entirely prevent it unless the bonds are anchored to an immobile object or tethered by an opposing force. A grabbed creature moves at half speed, cannot run or charge, and takes a –2 penalty on all attack rolls and to Dexterity. A grabbed character who attempts to cast a spell must make a concentration check (DC 15 + spell level) or lose the spell.

## **GRAPPLED**

A grappled creature is hindered by a creature, trap, or effect. Grappled creatures suffer the following effects. A grappled creature . . .

- ❖ cannot move and takes a –4 penalty to Dexterity.
- ❖ suffers a –2 penalty on all attack rolls and combat maneuver checks, except those made to grapple or escape a grapple.
- ❖ can take no action that requires two hands to perform
- ❖ cannot make opportunity attacks.
- ❖ cannot use Stealth to hide from the creature grappling it, even if a special ability, such as hide in plain sight, would normally allow it to do so.
- ❖ that becomes invisible, through a spell or other ability, it gains a +2 circumstance bonus on its CMD to avoid a grappling attack, but receives no other benefit.

**Casting Spells while grappled/Grappling.** Casting a spell while you have the grappled or pinned condition is difficult and requires a concentration check (DC 10 + the grappler's CMB + the level of the spell you're casting). pinned creatures can only cast spells that do not have somatic components.

## **INCAPACITATED (HELPLESS)**

A helpless character is paralyzed, held, bound, sleeping, unconscious, or otherwise completely at an opponent's mercy. A helpless target is treated as having a Dexterity of 0 (–5 modifier). Melee attacks against a helpless target get a +4 bonus (equivalent to attacking a prone target). Ranged attacks get no special bonus against helpless targets. Rogues can sneak attack helpless targets.

As a full-round action, an enemy can use a melee weapon to deliver a *coup de grace* to a helpless foe. An enemy can also use a bow or crossbow, provided he is adjacent to the target. The attacker automatically hits and scores a critical hit. (A rogue also gets his sneak attack damage bonus against a helpless foe when delivering a *coup de grace*.) If the defender survives, he must make a Fortitude save (DC 10 + damage dealt) or die. Delivering a *coup de grace* provokes opportunity attacks.

Creatures that are immune to critical hits do not take critical damage, nor do they need to make Fortitude saves to avoid death if given a *coup de grace*.

## **PRONE**

The character is lying on the ground. A prone attacker has a –4 penalty on melee attack rolls and cannot use a ranged weapon (except for a crossbow). A prone defender gains a +4 bonus to Armor Class against ranged attacks, but takes a –4 penalty to AC against melee attacks.

Standing up is a move-equivalent action that provokes an opportunity attack.

## **STUNNED**

A stunned creature drops everything held, can't take actions, takes a –2 penalty to AC, and loses its Dexterity bonus to AC (if any).

Attackers receive a +4 bonus on attack rolls to perform combat maneuvers against a stunned opponent.



**RESTRAINED (PINNED)**

A pinned creature is tightly bound and can take *very* few actions—restrained (pinned) is a more severe version of grappled, and their effects do not stack. A pinned creature . . .

- ❖ cannot move and is denied its Dexterity bonus.
- ❖ takes an additional -4 penalty to his Armor Class.

The *only* actions a pinned creature may usually attempt are:

- ❖ It can always attempt to free itself, usually through a combat maneuver check or Escape Artist check
- ❖ It *can* take verbal and mental actions

**CASTING SPELLS WHILE PINNED.** Casting a spell while you have the grappled or pinned condition is difficult and requires a concentration check (DC 10 + the grapppler's CMB + the level of the spell you're casting), or the spell is lost. Pinned creatures can only cast spells that do not have somatic or material components.



Art by Rick Troula





# GRAPPLING TECHNIQUES

## CHAPTER 3



**A**fter you get a grip on the guy; after you improve that grip to the point where you've got sufficient control over your foe; after you wrestle or throw or trip or roll or shuffle yourself into a superior position, then you need to end the fight.

This again depends on the goals. The "real-world" goals of grappling might be:

**WIN A BUNCH OF "POINTS."** This might be through many position changes to demonstrate superior skill. Common in junior sports grappling or some types of wrestling. Get enough points, you win.

**GET A FIGHT-ENDING POSITION.** Achieve a pin or a particular relative position between combatants. These positions may or not be practical — in college wrestling, face-down is not a match-ending position (though you may be getting your face ground into the mat in unpleasant ways), but having your shoulders pressed to the ground ends the bout.

**CHANGE YOUR FOE'S POSITION SUDDENLY.** Judo and Sumo matches end this way. In lethal combat, it's a great way to unbalance and destabilize your opponent, which opens him up to fight-ending techniques (including "running the hell away").

**INFLICT PAIN.** Submission wrestling and many contests of machismo or dominance end when you bend the person into a pretzel and he says "Ow! You win!" Choke holds, arm bars, shoulder and knee bars and locks, finger locks, pressure points. They're all good.

**RENDER HIM UNCONSCIOUS.** Some versions of submissions can be by restricting blood flow to the brain. If you black out (this can happen in only a few seconds with the right technique), you're done.

**INJURE HIM.** Most moves that will submit can also be used to cause permanent injury. You can also, if fighting for life rather than grappling for fun, engage in a bit of judicious beating the bejeezus out of your foe. The classic "ground and pound" from MMA, where you leverage a position on top of your foe to repeatedly beat him in the face is an example here.

**KILL HIM.** Choke him until brain death. Break his neck. Strike until he dies, with or without a weapon.

These goals can change as the fight changes, of course.



## AFTER THE GRAPPLE

After the foe has been grappled, a combatant may develop or discard the grapple. You may also do other things once you have applied at least the grabbed condition to your foe. The actions a fighter can take after applying control points to the target are termed grappling techniques.

**ATTACK (GRAPPLE).** You can attack to try to get more control. Roll to hit normally. If you exceed the Grapple DC, roll grappling additional control points, and resolve any new or increased effects.

**ATTACK (STRIKE).** You may make an armed or unarmed attack against your foe, subject to any conditions you are suffering. Armed attacks with anything but a light weapon have disadvantage (-5) if you are grabbed or worse. The Weapon Grappler feat (presented earlier) relaxes this restriction.

**BRUTE DEFENSE (REACTION OR IMMEDIATE ACTION).** A grabbed character can use a reaction or immediate action to try and shed the grapple. Do not make an attack roll; just roll normal grappling damage, but halve it (rounding down).

You may immediately shed the grabbed condition if the rolled control for the brute defense exceeds that of the grab. If the control inflicted on you comes from multiple creatures, throw off the weakest grapple first and compare the remaining control points to the next-strongest grapple. In all cases (one grapple or many), each is all-or-nothing—either you shed a grapple completely or there is no effect (control is not reduced). This allows an ancient black dragon to shrug off an attempted grapple by a small swarm of sprites without thinking about it much.

You may not attempt this if your condition is grappled or worse: only grabbed qualifies.



**COUNTER-GRAPPLING.** You can always attempt to grab a foe back. Attack normally, and if you hit roll for CP—though both the hit roll and the damage roll may be penalized due to the grapple that's on you! You may apply that damage either to put CP on your opponent, or to reduce the CP your opponent has on you. You may freely allocate control between increasing the CP on the foe and reducing CP applied by foes on the grappler making the attack roll.

Counter-grappling does not provoke opportunity attacks.

**INCAPACITATE.** Once your control exceeds the victim's Control Maximum, he, she, or it is pinned and helpless, with the incapacitated condition. No physical actions are possible—even speech, if you could conceivably cover its mouth(s). At this point, the foe is treated essentially as an object—if you can pick up and carry your foe(s) and your gear without exceeding your carrying capacity, you may do so!

**INFLICT PAIN.** You can attempt render your foe stunned by applying pain through joint manipulation techniques if you have your foe restrained or better. Make an attack roll against the foe's Grapple DC, and if that is successful, the opponent must make a Constitution (or Fortitude) saving throw at a DC equal to  $8 + \text{the foe's attack roll bonus}$ . If the save fails, the foe is stunned for that turn. A morale check to see if the foe gives up (taps out) would be appropriate in circumstances where the parties are not engaged in a fight to the death.

This method is for the deliberate application of pain to stun the foe — injury or submission via strangulation have separate mechanics.

**INJURE THE FOE (GRAPPLING).** You can attempt to convert your control to damage. Make a normal grappling attack roll. If you hit, in addition to inflicting more control, you may convert control to injury: Spend at least 4 control to inflict 1d4 wounds, 6 for 1d6, or any combination of points and dice desired. However, once you use them for damage, they're gone. If the damage type of the attack matters, consider it bludgeoning. This is a less rapid method of doing injury to an opponent than hacking it to death with a sword. It is, however, *much* faster than unarmed combat, which usually only does a base damage of 1 HP.

**INJURE THE FOE (STRIKING).** You may convert control to add additional damage to a striking attack by pulling your foe into the strike. Make a weapon attack, and you may spend control up to the maximum total you can roll on your dice (6 control for a 1d6 weapon, 12 control for 2d6 or 1d12, etc.). The amount spent is turned into dice based on the maximum number you can roll on it. You do not need to expend your entire total, and any control points not spent are retained.

*Example: Thundark is grappling some goblins. He has one by the neck for 9 control (he likes that) and a shortsword in the other hand, which he uses to strike his foe. The shortsword does 1d6 damage, so he can spend up to 6 control. He hits, and may spend 4 or 6 control, adding 1d4 or 1d6 damage to the 1d6+4 he'll usually roll for a shortsword attack.*



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**LET GO.** You can loosen or release the grip on your foe as a free action at any time. You can reduce your control point total by any amount desired, to a minimum of zero. This, of course, does not remove any control on you.

## WHY LET GO?

*A creature that is applying control to a victim is impacted as well, though usually to a lesser extent than his foe. It may be that a great control roll is more than sufficient to incapacitate the opponent, and would carry negative effects on the attacker that a lower damage roll would not cause. The “Let Go” option allows a great attack with a great damage roll to not be disadvantageous to the attacker.*

**STRANGLE.** If a creature breathes or has blood, it may potentially be strangled. In order to attempt this, you must have your foe at least grappled. Attempts to strangle are made with an attack roll, and the roll has disadvantage, or a -5 penalty, depending on the rules in use. The attack roll must meet or exceed the Grapple DC, or the Constitution (Fortitude) saving throw, whichever is higher.

If the attack roll is successful, the attacker inflicts one “point” of strangulation, plus an additional point for each 10 points by which the attack roll is made.

On the turn of the creature being strangled, it may attack to break free; such attempts are made with advantage or at +5 to the roll (this will frequently be neutralized by Conditions applied by the grappler). A successful attack removes one point of strangulation, plus an additional point for each 5 points by which the roll is made. It is easier to prevent strangulation than to apply a strangle.

If the target accrues points equal to 1 + its Constitution bonus (minimum 1), it falls unconscious.

*Note: this is a common but potentially unbalancing attack. Strangling a storm giant (with a CM of 96!) for a few turns in order to bypass many turns of wrestling may seem like cheating...but that’s exactly what it is designed to do. The GM may wish to consider forbidding this technique.*

**STUNNING THROW.** If you have grappled your foe for more than 1/2 of his CM in control points, you may attempt to slam the creature to the ground, stunning it. First, make a grappling attack roll against the foe’s Grapple DC. If it is successful, you may spend 1/2 of your foe’s current CM in control points, and throw your foe to the ground, rendering them prone. Further, the foe is stunned and may take no actions for 1d4 turns or until they make an appropriate roll to recover from stun.

The GM may wish to restrict this to the Monk character class, or characters that have taken a specific feat to allow this ability, to prevent trampling the Monk’s martial arts niche.

**TAKEDOWN.** If you have grappled your foe for more than 1/5 of his CM in control points, you may attempt a takedown. First, make a grappling attack roll against the target’s Grapple DC. If it is successful, you may spend 1/5 of their current CM in Control Points, and force your opponent to the ground, rendering them prone.

**WRESTLING FOR AN ITEM.** You can always specify if you want to grab an item. If you manage to amass more CP than 1/2 of the wielder’s current CM, you can attempt to wrest it from their grasp. This takes a full turn. Roll to hit vs. the foe’s Grapple DC. If you succeed, you take it away.

The GM is free to assign to-hit penalties for the size of the object (often a weapon) to be wrested. Rings, jewels, and other tiny objects at -8, 1d4 weapons and potions at -6, 1d6 weapons and wands at -4, 1d8 and 2d4 at -2, and 1d10 weapons at no penalty; an additional -2 for a two-handed weapon) if he’s feeling ornery.



Art by Christian Villacis



## INSTANT TECHNIQUES

*Just as with basic grappling, you may execute certain moves provided you have your foe in an appropriately severe condition.*

**INJURY.** *If you have your foe in at least a grappled condition, you may use your grapple to apply injury to them. Make an attack roll against the Grapple DC, and if successful, inflict 1d6 + Strength bonus HP of damage. Executing this option does not change the conditional state of either grappler.*

**TAKEDOWN.** *If you have at least grappled your foe and they are not prone, you may force them prone by making an attack roll against their Grapple DC. If the attack is successful, you may either force them prone but lower the strength of the grapple by one level, or keep the same condition level but drop prone as well.*

**STUNNING THROW.** *If you have at least hindered your foe and they are not prone, you may force them prone and attempt to stun them by making an attack roll against their Grapple DC. If the attack is successful, you may either force them prone but lower the strength of the grapple by two levels, or only drop by condition level but drop prone as well. In either case, if your attack roll is successful, your foe is stunned for 1d6 turns.*

## DRAGGING, FLINGING, AND SHOVING

If you, as a grappler, are not likewise subject to a condition limiting your own movement, you may forcibly attempt to move your foe by winning a contest of Strength, Athletics, or using your Combat Maneuver Bonus, as appropriate.

If you win, you may move your foe five feet in any direction. If you win by 10, you may move them 10', and up to 15' if you win by 20!

**SIZE MATTERS.** Look up the multipliers on the Size Adjustment table (see Monstrous Grappling) based on the size class of the creatures attempting the shove. Divide the attacker's size modifier for control by the defender's, and multiply the distance above by that figure.

*Example: If a tiny creature ( $\times 1/2$ ) tries to shove a huge one ( $\times 2$ ), then the distance shoved will be multiplied by  $1/4$ . If a Gargantuan creature ( $\times 4$ ) gives a tiny creature ( $\times 1/2$ ) the brush-off, the distance will be multiplied by 8. It's thus possible for that poor critter to get thrown up to 120'!*

**DRAGGING.** Moving your foe with you while retaining your grapple on them is considered dragging.

**FLINGING.** You can also release your grapple and throw the foe in any direction you choose. This is flinging.

**LIMITS OF MOVEMENT.** It's possible that you win a contest by enough to displace a creature farther than your Move allows. You have three options: limit the total movement to whatever Move you have remaining, fling your foe the total distance (abandoning the grapple), or move as far as you can, and fling your foe the rest of the way (again, abandoning the grapple).

**SPLAT.** When a thrown creature lands on a hard surface (including impacting a wall), treat it as fall from half the height of the total distance thrown. If an ability, feat, or skill (such as Acrobatics) can be used to reduce the height or severity of a fall, it can also reduce the injury taken when tossed.

## SHOVING A CREATURE

Using the Attack action, you can make a special melee attack to shove a creature, either to knock it prone or push it away from you. If you're able to make multiple attacks with the Attack action, this attack replaces one of them.

The target must be no more than one size larger than you and must be within your reach. Instead of making an attack roll, you must win a contest pitting the attacker's Strength, Athletics, or Combat Maneuver Bonus against the best of the defender's Strength or Dexterity, Athletics or Acrobatics, or the CMB based on Strength or Dexterity (a bonus equal to the BAB + Dexterity bonus, rather than Strength; do not use CMD in this case). If you win the contest, you either knock the target prone or push it 5 feet away from you.



## GRAPPLING WITH WEAPONS

Weapon-based fighting manuals written by folks who expected their students to have to violently defend their own lives—and take the lives of others—nearly always included a wide body of grappling techniques in their fighting advice. It's entertaining and true to life to have that kind of variety and option in games, but only where it can be supported and doesn't violate the principle of keeping the various fighting methods at the same level of abstraction.

Where that can be done, having fights smoothly flow between a primary weapon, a secondary weapon (including a shield), and hands and feet used for both striking and grappling should not be an unattainable goal.

There are a few special rules whether grappling with weapons in hand.

**REACH WEAPONS.** It is awkward to wrestle and grapple with an opponent while also wielding a six to twelve foot pole. Grappling while using these sorts of weapons has disadvantage, or a -5 penalty, as appropriate

**WEAPONS THAT GRAPPLE.** Some weapons, such as whips or jitte, jutte, and sai, can grapple by design. These will have a grappling mode that does as much control damage as the weapon's usual method of employment.

Unless the weapon is purposefully designed to strike and grapple at the same time (such as bolas), the grappling mode replaces, rather than augments, that damage. If a weapon is designed for such, just roll the damage once, and apply both HP and control equal in amount to the roll on the dice.

Example: A Balor has a whip that does 2d6+8 slashing damage and has a special grappling mode. Rather than resolve it as a special case, the GM instead decides that the whip on a hit will do both slashing and control damage. An effect roll of 2d6+8 will usually range between 10-20 control damage, which is enough to Restrain or Incapacitate many low-level foes in one blow.

## MAGICAL GRAPPLING

Many magical spells have a grappling-like effect to them. There are two ways to deal with these effects.

**CONDITION-BASED CONTROL.** A spell might be described as giving the target the restrained condition, or that the target is grappled. In either case, the spell can be considered to inflict enough control points to put the targeted creature solidly in the middle of that condition.

Example: The entangle spell might cause the victim to be restrained if they fail a Strength saving throw with DC equal to the caster's Spell Save DC. For a zero-level human with a Control Maximum of 10, this would be 7 CP. For a mighty warrior with a Control Maximum of 30, the middle of the restrained condition is about 22 CP.

**CONVERT TO CONTROL.** A more scalable method would be to look at the level of foe upon whom the spell is meant to be used, and have the base spell inflict enough control points that will, on average, have the desired effect. If in doubt, 1d10 or 2d6 control per level of the caster throwing the spell is probably appropriate as a ballpark figure for control damage. Spells with a long duration might do additional control each turn.

Example: Entangle is a 1st-level spell designed to be used by 1st-level casters. The GM decides 2d6 is appropriate for this spell. Moreover, even though the spell usually has no extra effect when cast with a higher level spell slot, the GM decides that each spell slot increases the control dealt by an additional 2d6, so that a 8th-level entangle will do 16d6 control, which (on the average) will inflict an impressive 56 control—enough to Restrain some fairly mighty foes.

Several Fifth Edition grappling-type spells are converted below for illustration.

**BLACK TENTACLES.** 4d10 control and 3d6 bludgeoning. Creatures that start their turn in the area of effect who are at least grabbed take the full bludgeoning damage and an additional 1d10 control.



**ENTANGLE.** 1d10 control. Casting at a higher level spell slot does an additional 1d10 per level of slot used.

**FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT.** Removes 6d10 control points from any grappling attack. The target can spend 5 feet of movement to shed an additional 6d10 control from non-magical restraints.

**IMPRISONMENT.** The chaining version of this 9th-level spell seems to impose an absolute condition, so simply declaring the target irrevocably restrained would work. Converting to control would suggest as much as 20d10 control, or even 100+10d10 to ensure an appropriately humongous effect.

**PRISMATIC SPRAY.** The 7th-level spell would suggest as much as 13d10 control . . . but every other effect for the other colors in the spell is 10d6, so perhaps either use that, or 20d6 for symmetry.

**TELEKINESIS.** Cast by a 9th-level caster, the spell does 9d10 control to restrain a foe. Can add an additional 1d10 per spell slot. This would also be another good candidate for an absolute restrained effect, since the victim really can't break out, only avoid the effects with the initial saving throw.

**WEB.** The web is cast by a 3rd-level caster, and so 3d10 is a good start. The enwebbed target can attack to break free each round, and is no longer grabbed when they reduce the control imparted by the web to 0.



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# **MONSTROUS GRAPPLING**

## **CHAPTER 4**



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If the player characters are not frightened when a monster attempts to grapple them, they should be. When a large, powerful, *hungry* creature grapples a PC it should—without a doubt—lead most adventurers to question their choice of career.

Many monster's default first attack in the game is a normal swipe of a weapon, claw, or a bite that does hit points of injury. There are plenty of creatures for which this is fine—an orc is likely going to slash at you with a sword or shoot an arrow at you, while a hill giant might bash with a club. Other monsters, such as magical creatures, have a natural leading attack that is right up their alley, such as a dragon's breath weapon.

But many creatures, especially beasts, aren't trying to kill you because your alignment is different than theirs, or they're acting on orders from the evil Foom the Woc God. They're trying to kill you because they're hungry, and for whatever reason, you look like a movable feast.

These creatures will most frequently pounce on prey, knock them down, and then strangle them or hit them with some sort of disabling attack. Consider a (giant) constrictor snake: nearly everything they do is a grapple. They bite to grapple and bring their coils to bear, then constrict to cause suffocation until their prey expires.

Predatory felines will use their claws to knock down their prey, and then go for the throat in order to choke out their prey. Any bleeding and laceration that occurs is fairly incidental (though it may also be fatal). Hyenas will team up to dismember their kills in a shockingly violent manner.

So to repeat—monsters that grapple should be scary. The rest of this chapter gives advice for making them that way.

## MONSTROUS STAT BLOCKS

All relevant game systems (for **DUNGEON GRAPPLING**, of course!) provide monsters with a rating for Armor Class, Hit Dice, and the Damage on a successful attack. Attack “bonuses” are usually imputed by virtue of attack tables, but may also be explicit.

### OGRE

This is a simple write-up of a common monster—the Ogre. It should be large, strong, and dangerous if it gets its grubby mitts on you while grappling. Not much information is provided, however, and a basic grappling system must deal with that.

**Hit Dice:** 4+1

**Armor Class:** 5 [14]

**Attacks:** Weapon (1d10)

**Saving Throw:** 13

**Special:** None

**Move:** 9

**Alignment:** Chaos

**Challenge Level/XP:** 4/120

The first monster example is from Swords and Wizardry, which only gives monsters their Armor Class, Hit Dice, and weapon damage. The attack bonus must be inferred from the relevant attack tables.

More recent systems give much more additional information.

## MONSTROUS GRAPPLE DC

As with characters, monsters have a target number that represents a combination of strength, agility, and threat level.

### GRAPPLE DC WITH LIMITED INFORMATION

The quantity with the most uncertainty and the most options to derive from basic systems is the defensive target number. If lacking better information with which to set Grapple DC, consider the following.

**ARMOR CLASS.** Setting the Grapple DC equal to the AC of the creature (if using ascending AC), or the target number found on the appropriate table using descending AC, has a lot to recommend it where simplicity is concerned. It's provided in every stat block and once the GM knows the hit number for a



particular assailant, that number does not change depending on the attack mode.

**HIT DICE.** Creatures will gain in strength, size, and speed as their Hit Dice increase: They always become more dangerous. Just as higher Hit Dice give more hit points (and thus can absorb more grappling attacks before they suffer consequences), they may be more canny fighters as well. This might suggest setting the Grapple DC equal to 9 + half the Hit Dice of a creature (round Hit Dice up). For low-threat foes, this will produce a Grapple DC of 10 or 11. Against a 10 HD Balor with AC 2 [17], the Grapple DC would be 14. A demon prince with AC -6 [25] and 30 HD would still be Grapple DC 24, a fearsome challenge.

It may also be useful to compute both quantities, and choose which one makes more sense. A Purple Worm has AC 6 [13]—it's large and easy to hit. It also has 15 Hit Dice and would thus have Grapple DC 17—it is large and hard to grapple. Sensible. A humanoid creature with thick scales or in tough armor that is hard to wound but not overly skilled might have a Grapple DC of 11 but Armor Class 3 [16].

## GRAPPLE DC: FULL STAT BLOCKS

When given the information in a full stat block, calculate Grapple DC depending on the rules used.

**THE PATHFINDER ROLEPLAYING GAME.** The Combat Maneuver Defense is given in every monster stat block, and is used as the monster's Grapple DC.

**FIFTH EDITION.** Those monsters that are particularly adept (or actually trained) at grappling are provided with the Athletics skill. Acrobatics for monsters is very rare, and so most creatures will defend against grapples only using their basic attribute bonuses.

**GRAPPLE DC (FIFTH EDITION) = 10 + BEST OF STRENGTH (ATHLETICS) OR DEXTERITY BONUS + SPECIAL ABILITIES**



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## MONSTROUS GRAPPLING ATTACKS

As with player characters, a monster attacks to grapple by rolling 1d20, adding their Strength bonus, plus their proficiency if it is appropriate.

**BASIC ATTACKS.** Roll 1d20 + the monster's number of Hit Dice. If this roll equals or exceeds the target's Grapple DC, the attack was successful: roll for control points.

**PFRPG.** All grappling attacks use the Combat Maneuver Bonus, though some of the more interesting feats may require re-interpretation with the framework of **DUNGEON GRAPPLING**. Some feats given to monsters or characters may also add to the attack roll.

**FIFTH EDITION.** Grappling attacks roll 1d20 plus the Strength (Athletics) bonus. If a monster has a grappling-specific attack, the appropriate attack bonus will appear under Actions.

## MONSTROUS GRAPPLING EFFECTS

Monsters that attempt to grapple use the same rules for characters—if a hit is scored with a grappling attack, control points are rolled, and inflicted as damage. Then the effects are assessed by comparing the control inflicted with the target's Control Maximum.

### CONTROL POINT ROLLS

There is frequently no way to determine how strong a monster's grappling attack "should" be given the minimal write-ups provided in old-style systems. From that perspective, simply err on the side of being scary. This section only speaks to how to increment control points. The details are presented later.

**ATHLETICS OR GRAPPLING FEATS.** Treat monsters with the Athletics skill or one or more grappling feats as one size class larger when determining how much grappling damage they can do on a single strike. If the creature has maximized the dice of damage already, increase the die type by one size instead.

Don't worry if the size class isn't in the game you are playing—just record the larger damage roll.



**MULTIPLE MONSTER ATTACKS.** Many creatures have more than one attack, such as multiple claw attacks plus a bite, or the multiple weapon attacks of a Marilith demon. The GM should allow any appropriate melee attack to be substituted with a grappling attack on a one-for-one basis.

*Example: A Medusa can't grapple with her gaze or snake-bite attacks, but certainly may with her melee attack. A minotaur may use his bite and melee (weapon) attack to grapple, but not his head butt. A GM's judgment is required here.*

**BASIC GRAPPLING DAMAGE.** If no specific grappling attack is given, assume that a creature will do control points equal to its basic grappling damage on the Size Adjustment Table, plus its Strength bonus, if any. An ogre is a Large creature and will have 2d6 as basic grappling damage, plus the Strength bonus for the particular ogre—an ogre with ST 18 (+4) would thus do 2d6+4 on a successful grapple.

*Example: A Strength 28 (+9 bonus) Huge Storm Giant has the Athletics skill in Fifth Edition and has the Improved Bull Rush feat in the PFRPG. The GM decides either would qualify to make the giant a fearsome grappler, and boosts damage by one size class to 3d8+9 control.*

## MONSTER SIZE

Larger creatures can bear more weight, whereas Tiny creatures can carry less. This is also true of how many wounds they can take, as well as how much effort must be exerted to grapple them.

When considering how challenging a creature is to grapple, multiply the creature's base CM by the modifier on the table, and record that as the Control Point Maximum.

It is very useful to note the range of control points that results in each Condition or penalty level (using the basic system). This may require some judgment, as basic monster write-ups do not always have a size class assigned.

## SIZE ADJUSTMENT TABLE

SIZE	SPACE	CONTROL POINT MAXIMUM MODIFIER	BASE GRAPPLING DAMAGE
Fine	½ by ½ ft.	× ¼	1d4-1
Diminutive	1 by 1 ft.	× 1/3	1d3
Tiny	2 ½ by 2 ½ ft.	× ½	1d4
Small	5 by 5 ft.	× ¾	1d6
Medium	5 by 5 ft.	× 1	1d8
Large	10 by 10 ft.	× 1.5	2d6
Huge	15 by 15 ft.	× 2	2d8
Gargantuan	20 by 20 ft.	× 3	3d8
Colossal	30 by 30 ft. or larger	× 4	4d8



Example: An ogre in the basic rules has 4+1 Hit Dice, and so will have 5-33 HP, averaging around 19. The GM pictures an ogre in their mind, and decides that it's definitely more like a Large creature than a Small one (and a check of a recent version of the game confirms this). The GM takes both methods:  $10 + 5 \times \text{HD}$  (and adding the +1) for 31 Control Maximum, vs  $(10+3 \times \text{HD} + 1) \times 1.5$  for 34 Control Maximum. They're not that different; the GM is free to select either one, and chooses 31.

Based on the CM, the GM knows that at 1-6 control points, the creature is grabbed; at 7-15 it is grappled, at 16-31 it is restrained, and at 32+ it is incapacitated. At a glance, the GM knows what the condition of the monster will be.

**TINY CREATURES STR, AND CP.** Tiny creatures are not just small and light, they frequently have very low Strength scores. A pixie is a Tiny creature with STR 2 (-4), for 1d4-4: It can never inflict control—not even on another pixie. That isn't right.

For Tiny creatures with negative Strength bonuses, instead of directly applying the penalty and rolling 1d4 as control damage, shift the damage dice to a lower value based on the table below. Treat rolls of negative numbers as zero control points inflicted.

## CONTROL DAMAGE FOR TINY CREATURES TABLE

**STRENGTH 10-11 8-9 6-7 4-5 2-3 1**

Tiny	1d4	1d3	1d4-1	1d3-1	1d2-1	1d3-2
Diminutive	1d3	1d4-1	1d3-1	1d2-1	1d3-2	1d4-3
Fine	1d4-1	1d3-1	1d2-1	1d3-2	1d4-3	1d6-5

## GRAPPLING, SIZE, AND MOVEMENT

When creatures of differing size and strength grapple each other, it is possible that one creature will be so large and/or strong that they can simply move a grappled creature without resorting to shoving or

flinging—they just pick them up and bear them off. With a minimal stat block, this has to be left to the judgment of the GM.

In most cases, even with a stat block, the weight of such creatures will not be known. In that case, adjudicate encumbrance by size modifier. When a creature is one size modifier larger than its target, if its Strength score is higher than its foes, it may move as if it is encumbered. If the Strength score is lower, it is heavily encumbered. Likewise, a creature two size classes larger than its victim may move freely if its Strength score is higher than the target, or as encumbered if it is lower.

If you know both the strength and weight of all involved, a creature that has no movement restrictions themselves (is at most grabbed, but not grappled, restrained, or incapacitated) and has restrained or incapacitated a foe by grappling can pick them up and carry them off if they weigh less than 1/5 the creature's carrying capacity. A Strength 10 gargantuan creature, with a Carrying Capacity of 1,200 lbs., can thus carry away a victim of up to 240 lbs. with no restrictions to movement. Treat a restrained or incapacitated foe like an object, and treat encumbrance penalties normally.

## CLAW, CLAW, BITE

If a specific melee attack is given in the monster's stat block that could reasonably be used to grapple, such as a claw, bite, or tentacle attack, assume that the attack can selectively be used to do the usual striking damage type, control points, or both, at the monster's whim. Most unintelligent monsters will not vary their attack method. A snake will always grapple to secure its prey, and then use its Constrict ability to do damage to its prey until it dies.

**BITING AND GNAWING.** Many creatures will bite and hold on—for example, predatory cats are famous for biting the neck and hanging on until their victim suffocates. A bite-and-grapple can be represented by one attack that does hit points (as usual), but also inflicts the same number of control points. On subsequent turns, the creature can improve this grapple through repeated attacks. A constrictor snake would be a good illustration of the principle. It bites to secure a grapple, then uses its powerful body to suffocate the prey.



# EXAMPLE MONSTERS

Some monsters are more interesting than others when grappling. Ten examples have been chosen to give a cross-section of critters that use grapples in combat, for hunting or more masochistic purposes.

Complete stat blocks are not provided—only the relevant material for use in grappling.

## ADULT RED DRAGON (5E)

The classic dragon of fantasy, these large creatures are worthy and dangerous foes. They grapple with their bite and claws, but are not natural wrestlers. They are dangerous because they are giant winged lizards that will hold a foe in place for an impromptu barbecue.

**Grapple DC:** 10

**Attacks:** 3

**Grappling Attack Roll:** 1d20+8

**Grappling Damage:** 2d6+8 (claw);  
2d10+8 (bite); 3d8+8 (inherent)

**Control Maximum:** 66

**Condition Thresholds:** Grabbed (1-13);  
Grappled (14-33); Restrained (34-66);  
Incapacitated (67+)

An adult red dragon is going to be a tremendous challenge to grapple despite its low Grapple DC. While it has average Dexterity and no particular grappling ability, its size class is Huge. In order to even make it notice you're there, you will need to amass a few dozen CP in one turn to get out of the grabbed condition. Its brute defense against grabbing foes will shake off 5-16 control simply by burning its reaction or consuming its immediate action.

While it may certainly bite and hold on, or grab a victim in order to immobilize it with up to three attacks per turn, the adult dragon is a grappling challenge largely because of its sheer bulk and strength. It should only be grappled by teams of foes, or by powerful magic.



Art by Juan Ochoa; Sponsored by Brandon Herl

## BAALROCH DEMON (S&W)

One of the archetypal demons, this gigantic, bat-winged creature is wreathed in shadow and flame. It is a potent fighter in any system, and wields a dangerous whip that it uses to both strike and grapple.

**Grapple DC:** 17

**Attacks:** 2

**Grappling Attack Roll:** 1d20+10

**Grappling Damage:** 3d8 whip  
or inherent

**Control Maximum:** 60

**Condition Thresholds:** Grabbed (1-12);  
Grappled (13-30); Restrained (31-60);  
Incapacitated (61+)

This creature appears in many systems, but the stat block is interpreted here from *Swords and Wizardry Complete*. The grapple DC is taken as the higher of ascending AC [17] or 9 plus half the creature's HD, or 14. This makes it a tough target. The attack roll is given a bonus equal to Hit Dice, and it is assumed to be a Huge creature, though there is no information to this in the description.

The whip attack has great reach and should allow a ranged grapple to nearly arbitrary distances. The basic grapple damage for a huge creature is used for the whip's control point attack. The whip can be used to drag the victim closer—the grappling attack roll is used here as well, 1d20+10, giving an excellent chance to drag the target close enough to burn.

The relatively low hit point totals for this game are characteristic of old-school play, but the relatively low number of attacks and low damage and strength bonuses for PCs will make the Baalroch Demon a tough nut to crack.



## CONSTRUCTOR SNAKE (PFRPG)

This constrictor probably represents a large boa constrictor, a python, or an anaconda. It is a natural grappler and gains the benefit of extra ability to hit when grappling (reflected in its CMB for grapples).

**Grapple DC:** 18 (CMD)

**Attacks:** 1

**Grappling Attack Roll:** 1d20+9 to grapple (based on CMB)

**Grappling Damage:** 1d4+4 initial bite; 1d8+4 constrict.

**Control Maximum:** 25

**Condition Thresholds:** Grabbed (1-5); Grappled (6-12); Restrained (13-25); Incapacitated (26+)

The grappling snake has a special ability that is modified when using the **DUNGEON GRAPPLING** rules. In combat, it will lash out with its bite. If it hits, it will apply both piercing and control damage. Once it has scored control points with its head, it will use its Constrict ability dealing control as a medium creature with an appropriate STR bonus.

The Constrict ability allows it to perform a grappling attack as a swift action in one of two ways. While it is using the Constrict ability, the snake itself is considered to be restrained.

- ♥ Immediately following a successful initial grapple with the head, it can follow up with a grapple with its body.
- ♥ After it has achieved the grappled condition on its foe, every turn, as a swift action, it may

automatically hit with a grappling attack for injury by rolling 1d8+4 and applying half the roll as bludgeoning damage as it crushes its foe to death.

## DARKMANTLE (PFRPG)

The darkmantle is a small, cavern-dwelling creature that falls on its prey from above, making a grappling attack followed by a constrict attack.

**Grapple DC:** 13 (CMD)

**Attacks:** 1

**Grappling Attack Roll:** 1d20+5 to grapple (based on CMB)

**Grappling Damage:** 1d4+4 constrict

**Control Maximum:** 9

**Condition Thresholds:** Grabbed (1); Grappled (2-4); Restrained (5-9); Incapacitated (10+)

This is a fairly mundane stalker-in-darkness. Its special ability to make a grab attack is subsumed into the **DUNGEON GRAPPLING** rules that allow the creature to both slam and do control damage by choice.

The Constrict ability allows it to perform a special grappling attack as a swift action. While it is using the Constrict ability, the darkmantle is considered to be restrained (pinned).

- ♥ After it has achieved a grappled condition on its foe, every turn, as a bonus action, it may automatically hit with a grappling attack for injury by rolling 1d4+4 and applying half the roll as bludgeoning damage as it crushes its foe to death.



Art by Christian Villacis; Sponsored by Kenny Johnson



## FIRE GIANT (5E)

The most combative and warlike of the giants, these huge creatures will have armor, weapons, and extensive training to go along with an incendiary temper.

**Grapple DC:** 21 (based on Athletics)

**Attacks:** 2

**Grappling Attack Roll:** 1d20+11 to grapple (based on Athletics)

**Grappling Damage:** 3d8+7

**Control Maximum:** 64

**Condition Thresholds:** Grabbed (1-12); Grappled (13-32); Restrained (33-64); Incapacitated (65+)

Another ridiculously dangerous grappler, Fire Giants combine their Huge size with proficiency in Athletics, which increases both their Grapple DC, their hit rolls, and makes them highly effective grapplers. The saving grace, perhaps, is that the greatsword, a very large, awkward weapon, cannot easily be brought to bear against a grappled foe.

Even so, a fire giant can do fearsome injury to a creature that comes within its grasp.

## HILL GIANT (S&W)

The hill giants are the least dangerous, but most repulsive, of the giant races, save perhaps for ettins and other deformities.

**Grapple DC:** 13 (based on HD)

**Attacks:** 1

**Grappling Attack Roll:** 1d20+8 to grapple (based on HD)

**Grappling Damage:** 2d8

**Control Maximum:** 50

**Condition Thresholds:** Grabbed (1-10); Grappled (11-25); Restrained (26-50); Incapacitated (51+)

Hill giants are large humanoids with no special grappling skills. They are largely dangerous because of the bonus granted by their high Hit Dice and relatively high control point total.

Their armor class is said to be granted by hides and pelts, so the smaller value based on Hit Dice was chosen for the Grapple DC. Large or huge creatures

would be 2d6 or 2d8 control points; since all the other hill giant attacks are 2d8, this value was chosen was well for grappling.

Their Control Maximum was figured using 10 + 5×HD; using the Size class calculation, it would be 51.

## LION (S&W)

A large predatory cat, lions will strike to knock a foe prone, and then grapple the neck to suffocate the prey or attempt to break its neck.

**Grapple DC:** 13 (Armor Class)

**Attacks:** 1

**Grappling Attack Roll:** 1d20+5 to grapple (based on HD)

**Grappling Damage:** 1d4 (claws); 1d8 (bite)

**Control Maximum:** 37

**Condition Thresholds:** Grabbed (1-7); Grappled (8-18); Restrained (19-37); Incapacitated (38+)

The lion will act as a fairly mundane grappler. It will attack from surprise or pursuit if it can, striking using a Shove to knock the foe prone. Once it can take advantage of a downed foe, a lion will bite to grapple, and then apply both damage and control with further attacks. When it can, it will convert control to injury by shaking the victim in order to snap its neck (no special effect here; it's just the description of what is causing the HP loss).

## OGRE (PFRPG)

The ogre, stupid, hunched, and always hungry, is always on the lookout for easy prey. Its large size and fearsome strength make it a dangerous combatant, even if it only grapples to hold its prey still while it beats it about the head with a club.

**Grapple DC:** 18 (CMD)

**Attacks:** 1

**Grappling Attack Roll:** 1d20+9 to grapple (based on CMB)

**Grappling Damage:** 2d6+10

**Control Maximum:** 31

**Condition Thresholds:** Grabbed (1-6); Grappled (7-15); Restrained (16-31); Incapacitated (32+)



Large, slow, and strong, the ogre is still no slouch if it gets its hands on you. As a large creature, its base grapple damage of 2d6 is boosted by its formidable strength bonus. If it can hold a foe immobile with a grapple, it can then add the control to damage with its great club.

## KOBOLD (PFRPG)

One of the most common foes in fantasy RPGs, the kobold represents a potentially canny challenge, largely because they tend to come in groups, and will dogpile a foe.

**Grapple DC:** 10 (CMD)

**Attacks:** 1

**Grappling Attack Roll:** 1d20-1 to grapple (based on CMB)

**Grappling Damage:** 1d6-1

**Control Maximum:** 7

**Condition Thresholds:** Grabbed (1); Grappled (2-3); Restrained (4-7); Incapacitated (8+)

Kobolds are interesting mostly because as individual combatants they are hardly a threat at all. 20 at a time, however, it's a different story. They will attack in waves, burying a foe in as many kobolds as can pile on, hoping to rack up enough control to pin or render helpless a foe in order to kill it with many spears.

## OTYUGH (5E)

These large, tentacled aberrations from beyond the universe are dangerous foes. They are not terribly difficult to grapple . . . if you can get close enough.

**Grapple DC:** 10

**Attacks:** 2 grappling attacks

**Grappling Attack Roll:** 1d20+6 to grapple

**Grappling Damage:** 1d8+3 control + 1d8+3 bludgeoning + 1d8 piercing

**Control Maximum:** 33

**Condition Thresholds:** Grabbed (1-6); Grappled (7-16); Restrained (17-33); Incapacitated (34+)

The otyugh's tentacles are the most interesting weapons, combining bludgeoning, piercing, and control damage in one strike. The otyugh does not attack with its bite to grapple.

Once the creature does get its tentacles on a foe, it likes to slam them together. Instead of an automatic success and a saving throw vs. Constitution, an alternate mechanic would be to treat this as a fling into a solid object, using the rules for Dragging, Flinging, and Shoving.

The otyugh might, based on its slam attack description, prefer to send one of its tentacles at each target, rather than combine on a single foe.

## ROPER (5E)

Another large grappling monstrosity, this creature resembles a natural rock formation. Until it tries to grab you with its tendrils.

**Grapple DC:** 9

**Attacks:** 4

**Grappling Attack Roll:** 1d20+7

**Grappling Damage:** 2d6+4

**Control Maximum:** 34

**Condition Thresholds:** Grabbed (1-6); Grappled (7-17); Restrained (18-34); Incapacitated (35+)

The roper will lash out with its tendrils, using as many as four on a single target. Once it achieves sufficient control points, it will use its Reel ability, which should be considered to provide advantage on the attack roll for Dragging a foe towards it.

The roper does not attempt to convert control to injury, rather it will simply increase control until it can successfully Reel a target in for a bite.



Art by Juan Ochoa



# COMBAT EXAMPLES

*What had started as a private conversation had broadened into something resembling a bard's tale. Julevin, characteristically lithe and with no small amount of stage presence, was standing on a chair, describing a recent reconnaissance expedition to a suspected warren of vile beasts not a day's ride from Northwatch. Both adventurers and townsfolk listened eagerly as she described her cautious approach, and equally stealthy return.*

*"Hah!" a towering man dressed in a rust-stained gambeson slurred loudly. "Couldn't bring yoursel' to get closer? Ha-elves. All sneak, no fight! I could bring back twice as much information . . . and treasure to boot!"*

*He threw his arms wide, as if to encompass vast piles of coin—and smacked a serving maid sharply in the face. The crowd grumbled loudly, and he was shoved from behind. Pulling a dagger, he turned . . .*

*"No weapons, Thorfirr!" the owner of the Wooden Golem Inn shouted. The warrior smirked, and with a firm and dramatic cast, embedded his dagger into a nearby wall. "Fine," Thorfirr said confidently, "who wants a piece of me?"*

*A space had cleared in the middle of the room, and a slender but ridiculously well-muscled man dressed in leather skirts and an oddly-fitted tunic stepped forward. "You owe the lady an apology."*

*"I never apolo . . ." Thorfirr started to say, but was interrupted as his unknown opponent lunged in.*

## BASIC RULES/ SWORDS AND WIZARDRY

The combatants in this bar brawl are Thorfirr, a drunken fighter (2nd level), and Thayle, a 4th-level Monk.

**THORFIRR.** STR 14; DEX 11; CON 10. He has 12 HP, and usually has a Grapple DC of 11 (+1 for his Strength, but a 2nd level fighter gets no attack bonus). However, he's in his cups, so the GM rules he takes the worst of STR and DEX bonuses, making his Grapple DC 10 for this fight. On a hit, he will roll 1d8+1 for control points. His Control Maximum is equal to his Hit Points: 12. He is grabbed at 1-2 control points, grappled at 3-6, restrained at 7-12, and incapacitated at 13+. He will roll 1d20+1 for a grappling attack.



Art by Gennifer Bone; Sponsored by Mary Ann Christianson



**THAYLE.** STR 13; DEX 17; CON 13. He has 14 HP (including +1 per HD for CON). As a Monk, he gets +3 to his Grapple DC due to his armor class being lowered by his class feature, another +1 due to his STR, and a generic +1 attack bonus due to level. His Grapple DC is thus 15. He rolls 1d8 for unarmed combat damage due to martial arts training, so he will also roll 1d8+1 for Control Points, and his Control Maximum is 14. Thayle is grabbed at 1-2 CP, grappled at 3-7, restrained at 8-14, and incapacitated at 15+.

### BAR FIGHT!

The combat opens with Thayle taking advantage of Thorfirr's boastful distraction. He lunges in, making an attack roll at 1d20+2 (+1 for basic attack bonus, and another +1 for strength). He rolls 15, and hits; his 1d8+1 roll for Control Points (CP) is a hefty 7. This renders Thorfirr instantly *restrained*. He is at -5 to hit, and his Grapple DC falls to only 5.

On Thorfirr's turn, he rolls 1d20-4 against a Thayle's Grapple DC of 15. He rolls an adjusted 2, and misses.

Thayle decides to go big. He qualifies for Stunning Throw, as he's over half Thorfirr's Control Maximum of 12. He rolls a natural 20! He spends 6 control points, and throws Thorfirr to the ground. Rolling 1d4 for the number of turns he's stunned, he gets a 1, but the GM decides the +1 to "damage" for critical hits applies, and Thorfirr is stunned for 2 rounds.

Thayle still has 1 control point, and automatically hits, two turns in a row, as his foe is stunned and prone, and 8 more CP are scored (the GM could easily just say "maximum damage" as well), making the total 9, putting him back in the *restrained* condition.

Thorfirr desperately tries to break free, but he's still rolling against that -5 penalty, and misses.

Thayle attacks again, only rolling an 8, but successful due to the lowered Grapple DC of his foe. The Control Point roll hits the maximum of 9 points, making the total 18. Thorfirr is incapacitated and can take no action. Thayle narrates that he will torque on Thorfirr's arm until he passes out or apologizes.

He passes out; the barmaid dumps ale on his head, and the bouncer carries him out.

*Thorfirr was nursing more than a sore arm. His pride had been damaged, and so he had decided to venture to where the ranger Julevin had indicated. He stood at the base of a shallow valley, and he could see the mouths of caves dotting the landscape—it was clear that the entire region was riddled with them. Still more than a little hung over from the prior night's exertions, he made his way closer, towards the nearest cave. Take station under that large tree, he'd thought, and get a good look into the cave mouth. He readied a small axe and a large one, adjusted his mail hauberk, and settled in to watch.*

*As he hid behind a tree trunk, small, yipping shapes dropped on him from above. His high perception gave him enough warning that he was prepared to defend himself.*

## THE PATHFINDER ROLEPLAYING GAME

Thorfirr is having a terrible week.

**THORFIRR.** Still a second-level fighter, somewhat randomly generating a similar character gives STR 16 (+3), DEX 11 (+0), CON 11 (+0), and WIS 16 (+3). His AC is 16, he has 17 HP, his BAB and CMB are +5, while CMD is 15. He has a hand axe, a battle axe, and wears chain mail. As a fighter, he will do 1d10+3 control points on a successful hit, and his Control Maximum is 18 (16 from STR, and +2 from BAB; no bonus from Dexterity. He also has Power Attack, Weapon Focus (Battleaxe), Point Blank Shot, and Cleave for Feats.

Thorfirr's thresholds are that he is grabbed with 1-3 CP, grappled at 4-9, restrained at 10-18, and incapacitated at 19+.

**KOBOLDS.** Each kobold has STR 9 (-1), DEX 13 (+1), CON 10, INT 10, WIS 9 (-1), and CHA 8 (-1). They have 5 HP, AC 15, CMD 10, BAB +1, and CMB of -1. As Small creatures, they only do 1d6 base control points on a hit, and their low STR adjusts that to 1d6-1. Based on their stats and BAB, their control maximum would normally be 10, but is adjusted downward to 7 because they are Small creatures.



There are, however, four of them. Their thresholds are such that they are grabbed at 1 CP, grappled at 2-3, restrained at 4-7, and incapacitated at 8+.

## DEATH FROM ABOVE

The kobolds attack from above, but not from surprise. In attempting to *establish* a grapple, they trigger Thorfirr's Opportunity Attack. He swings with his battle axe, rolling 22 against AC 15, hitting for 6 HP. One kobold goes down.

The other three all attack to grapple. They roll 1d20+1 vs Thorfirr's CMD 15. They get very, very lucky, and roll 17, 17, and a natural 20. Control Point rolls are poor, however, rolling 2, 2, and 3, doubled to 6. Thorfirr has 10 CP on him in the first turn, and is restrained. He suffers -4 to his AC and Grapple DC, but does not, in the PFRPG, take penalties to attack to free himself.

Thorfirr cannot avail himself of a brute defense, as he is more than grabbed. He's going to have to do this one at a time. He rolls 1d20+5 vs the kobold's CMD 10. He gets 21, and rolls 9 for CP. He not only sheds the most severe grapple, he grapples that kobold back for 3 CP, enough to grapple him. Since Thorfirr has the Cleave feat, he can attack again, rolls 16 and hits, and rolls 4 CP. Again, this breaks the second grapple, and grapples that one as well, for 2 CP. This only leaves 2 CP remaining, so Thorfirr is now only grabbed. This enables Thorfirr to declare a brute defense, consuming his immediate action. He rolls 1d10+3 and halves it. He rolls poorly, and gets a 5, but that is still enough to break the final grapple.

That was a good round for Thorfirr! He is no longer grappled, and has two kobolds in the grappled state.

The free kobold draws a dagger and attacks, rolling 1d20+1 against Thorfirr's AC 16. It rolls a 15 and misses. The other two attempt to escape, as their grapple checks are not penalized. They roll 1d20-1 anyway, vs CMD 15. Both roll 14, and both fail to free themselves.

Thorfirr's turn again, and he has his hands full of kobolds. He decides to do an unarmed strike on the kobold he has for 3 CP, rolling 1d20+5 vs their AC of 11 (adjusted down by -4 for being grappled). He rolls a 22, and hits decisively. He spends all his CP for injury, so rolls 1d3 (unarmed damage) + 1d3

(converting 3 CP to injury) + 3 (STR bonus). He does 7 HP of damage, and the second kobold is out of the fight.

Thorfirr's cleave feat enables him to make a second attack as well, and the other kobold he's grappling gets hit with a roll of 13 vs AC 11 (had the kobold not been grappled, the strike would have missed). This one does 1d3+1d2+3, again for 7 HP.

The last kobold looks at his three downed friends, and runs screaming for the cave. Thorfirr hurls his hand axe at him, rolls a 24 to hit, and rolls maximum damage.

Thorfirr displays the better part of valor, and after quickly looting a few dozen gold pieces from the four fallen kobolds, quits the field.

He'll be back, though. With friends.

## FIFTH EDITION

*The delve had gone well until the end, which Thorfirr supposed was how most things went in his line of work. He'd recruited Julevin by appealing to her abilities as a scout, and Barkan was as solid a warrior as they came. Ilyana, the holy warrior of Heimdall the Judge, practically camped out at his front door, demanding to free the unknown caves of the evil that lurked within.*

*It was Ilyana, however, who was draped across Barkan's shoulders, a crossbow bolt protruding from her unmoving chest. A lucky shot, from a spring-loaded trap, it had hit between pauldron and cuirass, where only the lightweight voider offered protection. She was in too much pain to heal herself, and their potions had been spent after clearing out the kobold nest.*

*Still, Ilyana was well regarded at Heimdall's temple, and she could be raised if they could get her there fast enough. The riches looted from the caves would provide ample reward even after paying that price.*

*There. The dim light of an exit. Barkan grunted loudly in a satisfied manner, and*



*Julevin shushed him, as she never saw reason to be loud when being ridiculously quiet would do.*

*She was right. Caught looking at Barkan, it was up to Thorfirr to sound the warning as the ceiling started to writhe 25' away. Tentacles became apparent, and the fight was on.*

Poor Thorfirr used his high passive protection score for good this time, and the team was not surprised by the Roper lurking between them and the cave mouth.

The cast of characters, this time with Fifth Edition stats. Ilyana is treated as 180 lbs. of encumbrance on Barkan (her own weight, plus her armor).

**THORFIRR.** A second-level fighter, and keeping his stats from the PFRPG gives STR 16 (+3), DEX 11 (+0), CON 11 (+0), and WIS 16 (+3). His AC is 16, he has 16 HP, his attack rolls are at +5, but lacking Athletics proficiency, he only grapples at 1d20+2. His Grapple DC is 13, from his Strength (Athletics) bonus of +3. His Control Maximum is 20 (his STR of 16, no DEX bonus, and 2× his +2 proficiency bonus).

He carries a battleaxe and a handaxe, wears chain mail armor, and has proficiency in Animal Handling, Intimidation, Perception, and Survival.

His control thresholds have him grabbed at 1-4 control, grappled at 5-10, restrained at 11-20, and incapacitated at 21+.

**JULEVIN.** A third-level half-elven ranger, she has STR 14 (+2), DEX 16 (+3), CON 12 (+1), and WIS 14 (+2). Her AC is 15, she has 25 HP, her attack rolls are at +5 with Dexterity, but lacking Athletics proficiency or high strength, she grapples at 1d20+2. Her Grapple DC is 13, from his Dexterity (Acrobatics) bonus of +3. Her Control Maximum is 21 (STR of 14, +3 DEX bonus, and 2× his +2 proficiency bonus).

She carries a longbow and short sword, wears studded leather armor. Her impressive skills list includes Animal Handling (+4), Insight (+4), Medicine (+4), Nature (+1), Perception (+4), Stealth (+5), and Survival (+4).

Her control thresholds have her grabbed at 1-4

control, grappled at 5-10, restrained at 11-21, and incapacitated at 22+.

**BARKAN.** A barbarian warrior for whom the dice were very kind, also 2nd-level. STR 18 (+4), DEX 17 (+3), CON 17 (+3), and WIS 14 (+2). His AC is 18, he has 25 HP, his attack rolls are at +6 for both melee and grappling. His Grapple DC is very good, owing to Unarmored Defense (+3) and Athletics Proficiency (+6), giving him Grapple DC 19. His Control Maximum is 25 (his STR of 18, +3 DEX bonus, and 2× his +2 proficiency bonus).

He carries a warhammer, a dagger, and carries a shield. Befitting his Barbarian nature, he wears no armor but his might. His proficiencies include Athletics (+6), Intimidation (+2), Perception (+4), and Survival (+4).

His control thresholds have him grabbed at 1-5 control, grappled at 6-12, restrained at 13-25, and incapacitated at 26+.

**ROPER.** Hiding out for the moment on the cave roof, this large monstrosity has AC 20, 93 HP, Grapple DC 9, and a Control Maximum of 34, owing to its size. It gets 4 attacks at 1d20+7, and inflicts 2d6+4 control per attack. If it can drag the target close, it will bite at 1d20+7, hitting for 4d8+4 piercing damage. The roper has STR 18 (+4), DEX 8 (-1).

The roper's CP thresholds are 1-6 for grabbed, 7-17 for grappled, 18-34 for restrained, and 35+ for incapacitated.

The roper is a tough foe – a CR 5 monster for an understrength party that is probably only capable of handling a CR 1-2 encounter.

### THE END OF YOUR ROPER

Since all creatures became aware of each other at roughly the same time, the GM calls for initiative rolls. Barkan rolls highest with 20, followed by Thorfirr with 17, then the roper with 12, and Julevin with a disappointing 10.

Barkan drops the body of the dead cleric, and rages as a bonus action. He does not have any useful thrown weapons (a definite oversight!), so he decides to try and run up underneath the roper and hit it with his sword; the ceilings are not high and



the GM decides the roper is within reach. This will, of course, put Barkan into easy bite range. He rolls 15, and his blow glances off the rock-like hide of the roper.

Thorfirr hurls a throwing axe at the beast, and hits with a 23, but only for 4 HP of damage. He readies another axe.

The roper gets four attacks with its tentacles. Two lash after Barkan, and one each at Julevin and Thorfirr. These are grappling attacks, which trigger opportunity attacks, but both miss due to the roper's high AC. The two tentacle attacks at Barkan roll 8 and 23; the second still hits for 9 CP – he is grappled. The tentacles at Julevin and Thorfirr roll 24 and 16 – both enough to hit, and each does 10 CP; they are also both grappled.

The roper can attack Barkan with its bite, as well, which is a melee weapon attack vs. Barkan's AC 18; it rolls 19 and hits, doing 21 HP of piercing damage; Barkan's rage takes this down to 11, but it's a very nasty bite. The roper also does a "Reel" on Julevin, which doubles the distance a foe is dragged. The roper is a natural grappler, so will roll  $1d20+7$  against Julevin's  $1d20+2$  for Strength. The roper rolls 20, but poor Julevin rolls only 3. The roper drags Julevin 20' (10' for winning the contest by 10, doubled for Reel), and she is now within 5' of the creature.

Julevin is only grappled, however, and so she attacks to break free vs the Roper's low Grapple DC 9. She rolls 11, a success, and removes 7 CP, bringing her to 3 CP, and only being "grabbed." She has already used her reaction making an opportunity attack, so she cannot elect a brute defense.

The round turns, and Barkan tries to free himself as well, and succeeds with an 18. He rolls  $1d12+4+2$  for his rage and gets 17 CP – he not only breaks free, he can (and does) grapple the roper by its own tentacle, inflicting 8 CP, which manages to grapple the roper.

Thorfirr is likewise grappled, and attacks to free himself before he can be reeled in. He rolls a natural 20! Doubling the dice for his control point roll, he rolls  $2d10+3$  and scores 11 CP more. The roper now has 19 CP on him, which moves him to the restrained category.

Well, the roper still gets four tentacle attacks, a bite, and a reel. It again attacks Barkan with two tentacles, Julevin with one, and Thorfirr with another. The re-attack on Julevin does not provoke an opportunity attack, but the attacks on the men do. They choose to grapple rather than strike, owing to the lower Grapple DC. They both attack with advantage as well. Barkan hits once for 13 more CP, while Thorfirr also hits and piles on for 7 CP more, making the total 39 CP. They have moved the roper to incapacitated.

Julevin can use brute defense to free herself, which rolling 8 and halving it, she does. She then draws her sword and goes to work on the incapacitated foe, eventually hacking it to death.

Thorfirr shoulders the body of their fallen comrade, and they rapidly make their way to the exit, and back to the keep at Northwatch.





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## HOW TO GRAPPLE

1. **ROLL TO HIT.** Make a grappling attack roll against the target's Grapple DC. Attacks to *establish a grapple* (no control has yet been scored) provoke an opportunity attack, if available.
  - A. **PERFORM GRAPPLING TECHNIQUES.** If the target has one or more control points on them, the attacker may execute applicable techniques listed in After the Grapple. These do not provoke opportunity attacks.
2. **ROLL DAMAGE.** Roll and apply *control points* to the target.
3. **ASSESS EFFECTS.** Compare the current total of applied control points vs the target's Control Maximum, and apply the effects shown on the Control Point Effects table.

## BASIC RULES (S&W/OSR)

For characters, use the following flow:

1. **ROLL TO HIT.**
  - ♥  $1d20 + \text{Strength Bonus} + \text{Attack Bonus}$  vs. Grapple DC
  - ♥  $\text{Grapple DC} = 10 + \text{Attack Bonus} + \text{Best Of Strength Or Dexterity Bonus} + \text{Class Features}$

-or-

  - ♥  $1d20 + \text{Strength Bonus}$  vs. Descending Grapple DC
  - ♥  $\text{Descending Grapple DC} = 9 - [\text{Best Of Strength Or Dexterity Bonus} + \text{Other Bonuses}]$
2. **ROLL DAMAGE.**
  - ♥  $\text{Damage (Control Points)} = \text{Hit Die Type} + \text{Strength Bonus}$
3. **ASSESS EFFECTS**
  - ♥  $\text{Control Maximum (Basic)} = 10 + 5 \times \text{Hit Dice (If Size Class Is Not Known)},$

-or-

  - ♥  $\text{Control Maximum (Basic)} = [10 + 3 \times \text{Hit Dice}] \times \text{CM Modifier (If Size Class Is Known)}$
  - ♥ Compare Control Points vs Control Maximum on Control Point Effects Table
  - ♥ Apply Attack, AC/Grapple DC, Move, and Cast Spell Restrictions (if any)

Modify as follows for monsters if using the Basic Rules:

- ♥  $\text{Grapple DC} = \text{Armor Class (if more appropriate)}$
- or-
- ♥  $\text{Grapple DC} = 9 + \text{Half The Hit Dice Of A Creature (Round Hit Dice Up)}$

## THE PATHFINDER ROLEPLAYING GAME

1. **ROLL TO HIT.**
  - ♥  $1d20 + \text{Combat Maneuver Bonus}$  vs. Grapple DC
  - ♥  $\text{Grapple DC} = \text{CMD} + \text{Special Abilities}$
2. **ROLL DAMAGE.**
  - ♥  $\text{Damage (Control Points)} = \text{Hit Die Type} + \text{Strength Bonus}$
3. **ASSESS EFFECTS.**
  - ♥  $\text{Control Maximum} = [\text{Strength Score} + \text{Dexterity Bonus} + \text{Half Of Bab}] \times \text{CM Modifier}$

-or-

  - ♥  $\text{Control Maximum (Agile Maneuvers)} = [\text{Strength Bonus} + \text{Dexterity Score} + \text{Half Of Bab}] \times \text{CM Modifier}$
  - ♥ Compare Control Points vs Control Maximum on Control Point Effects Table
  - ♥ Apply Condition and Condition restrictions, if any

## FIFTH EDITION

1. **ROLL TO HIT.**
  - ♥  $1d20 + \text{Strength Bonus} + \text{Proficiency Bonus}$
  - ♥  $\text{Grapple DC} = 10 + \text{Athletics or Acrobatics bonus} + \text{Special Abilities}$
2. **ROLL DAMAGE.**
  - ♥  $\text{Damage (Control Points)} = \text{Hit Die Type} + \text{Strength Bonus}$
3. **ASSESS EFFECTS.**
  - ♥  $\text{Control Maximum} = [\text{Strength score} + \text{Dexterity Bonus} + 2 \times \text{Proficiency Bonus}] \times \text{CM Modifier}$
  - ♥ Compare Control Points vs Control Maximum on Control Point Effects Table
  - ♥ Apply Condition and Condition restrictions, if any

## ATTACKING GRAPPLER EFFECTS

### TOTAL CP APPLIED TO FOES      CONDITION

Up to 1/2 Control Maximum	Grabbed
Up to Control Maximum	Grappled
Greater than CM	Restrained

## CONTROL POINT EFFECTS TABLE

CP INFLICTED UP TO	CONDITION	ATTACK PENALTY	AC/GRAPPLE DC PENALTY	MOVE	MISCAST SPELL
1/5 Control Maximum	Grabbed	-	-	Full	1-2
1/2 Control Maximum	Grappled	-2	-2	Half	1-3
Control Maximum	Restrained	-5	-5	None	1-5
Greater than CM	Incapacitated	No attack	-	None	No



## AFTER THE GRAPPLE

These are the possible actions after a grapple; a shorthand for the invoked mechanic is provided, but see the main text for details.

**ATTACK (GRAPPLE).** Attack to build up more control. [Attack vs Grapple DC; Inflict control damage]

**ATTACK (STRIKE).** Attack to inflict injury with a fist or weapon. [Attack vs AC; inflict HP damage]

**BRUTE DEFENSE (REACTION OR IMMEDIATE ACTION).** Use your size and strength to shake off unworthy foes if you are only grabbed, but not grappled or worse. [Roll half control damage; shed weakest grapple first; all or nothing]

**COUNTER-GRAPPLING.** Attack to remove control points applied on you by foes. Does not provoke opportunity attacks. [Attack vs Grapple DC; remove CP from foe]

**INCAPACITATE.** Build up so much control that your foe can't move; they are treated as encumbrance if you are strong enough to move them. [Foe cannot take actions]

**INFLICT PAIN.** Attempt to stun your foe by applying pressure to joints and vital areas. [If foe Restrained, Attack vs Grapple DC. Con/Fort save or stunned 1 turn]

**INJURE THE FOE (GRAPPLING).** Attempt to injure your foe by spending control points to inflict Hit Points. [Attack vs Grapple DC; spend X CP for 1dX HP]

**INJURE THE FOE (STRIKING).** Add extra damage to a weapon attack by spending control points. [Attack vs AC; spend X CP to add 1dX HP damage]

**LET GO.** Can be done as a free action at any time. [Lose some or all CP; free action]

**STRANGLE.** Attack to render a foe quickly unconscious. Some restrictions apply. [If Grappled, Attack at disadvantage/-5 vs Grapple DC; points of strangulation if successful]

**STUNNING THROW.** Slam your foe to the ground and try to stun them. May be restricted to Monks; ask the GM. [If Restrained, Attack vs Grapple DC, spend CP = CM/2, 1d4 turns stun]

**TAKEDOWN.** Render your foe prone. [If Grappled, Attack vs Grapple DC; spend CP = CM/5, foe prone]

**WRESTLING FOR AN ITEM.** Take their stuff. Includes disarm attempts. [If Restrained, Attack vs Grapple DC. Take item on success.]

**DRAGGING.** Move your foe(s) with you. [Contest of STR, Athletics, or CMB; move foe if successful]

**FLINGING.** Throw your foes through the air away from you. [Contest of STR, Athletics, or CMB; move foe if successful]

**SHOVE.** Push your foe 5' away from you or knock it prone (attacker's choice). [Contest of STR, Athletics, or CMB; foe prone on success]

## CONTROL POINT BASE DAMAGE BY CHARACTER CLASS

BASE CP DAMAGE	BASIC RULES (S&W/OSR)	PATHFINDER & 5E RULES
1d4	Magic-User, Monk, Thief	
1d6	Assassin, Cleric, Druid	Sorcerer, Wizard
1d8	Fighter, Paladin, Ranger	Bard, Cleric, Druid, Monk, Rogue, Warlock
1d10		Fighter, Paladin, Ranger
1d12		Barbarian

All classes add their STR bonus to their base CP damage; Monks may add or replace their damage depending on martial arts skills. The Agile Grappler/Agile Maneuvers feat substitutes the Dexterity Bonus instead of Strength.



## MONSTER SIZE ADJUSTMENT TABLE

SIZE	SPACE	CONTROL POINT MAXIMUM MODIFIER	BASE GRAPPLING DAMAGE
Fine	½ by ½ ft.	× ¼	1d4-1
Diminutive	1 by 1 ft.	× ⅓	1d3
Tiny	2 ½ by 2 ½ ft.	× ½	1d4
Small	5 by 5 ft.	× ¾	1d6
Medium	5 by 5 ft.	× 1	1d8
Large	10 by 10 ft.	× 1.5	2d6
Huge	15 by 15 ft.	× 2	2d8
Gargantuan	20 by 20 ft.	× 3	3d8
Colossal	30 by 30 ft. or larger	× 4	4d8

## CONTROL DAMAGE FOR TINY CREATURES TABLE

STRENGTH	10-11	8-9	6-7	4-5	2-3	1
Tiny	1d4	1d3	1d4-1	1d3-1	1d2-1	1d3-2
Diminutive	1d3	1d4-1	1d3-1	1d2-1	1d3-2	1d4-3
Fine	1d4-1	1d3-1	1d2-1	1d3-2	1d4-3	1d6-5





## Live to Grapple. Grapple to Live.

- ◆ Beowulf struggles with Grendel. Sinew parts, Grendel flees, dying.
- ◆ A dragon plunges from above. Its grasping talons seize the adventurers, bearing them away.
- ◆ Mighty Ajax and Clever Odysseus struggle against each other, yet neither can throw the other, nor be thrown.
- ◆ A python lashes out, grasping its prey first by the mouth, then its coils. The helpless creature struggles weakly, then not at all.

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