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Common DM Rulings (Game Mechanic FAQ)

This section provides general answers to some common questions where the RAW are ambiguous, unclear, or contradictory. Or they are areas of the rules that do not easily translate to the West Marches format. Most players do not need to know the information below, but it is provided for transparency and to encourage consistency across DMs. However, these are areas of the game that WotC left up to DM interpretation, or have not made definitive rulings on, thus individual DMs may choose to use rulings different than those presented here so if they apply to you ask your DM for their interpretation on these situations.

Can pets/familiars/summons/companions use magic items?

In general any creature associated with a player character that is not humanoid cannot attune or use magic items, with the exception of using or administering potions if the creature is physically capable of doing so. This applies to : conjured / summoned creatures, animated undead, awakened animals/plants, beastmaster animal companions, artificer homunculus, artificer steel defender, artificer arcane cannons, familiars, mounts created by the Find Steed or Find Greater Steed spell and possibly others.

When can I use an item with a recharge time of > 1 day?

Items with a recharge time of > 1 day (for instance the Figurines of Wondrous Power) are assumed to be recharged at the start of a quest. For Colosseum fights usually it will be allowed to be recharged but double check with the DM to make their job balancing the encounter easier.

Who gets to decide what I summon with Conjuration spells?

Certain spells like Conjure Animals and Conjure Woodland Beings are unclear as to how it is determined which creatures are conjured. In general, the caster may suggest what is conjured but the DM may veto it, though many DMs will determine the creatures by rolling on HB tables or based on what would be suitable for the present environment.

Can I conjure X?

Creatures conjured by theses spells may use the 5e statblock of a creature from any official WotC published source. However, the well known "broken" conjuration spell creatures - i.e. Chwingas, and Pixies - are generally not available.

Can I cast a spell I learned from X using my spellslots?

Player characters can gain access to spells from many sources: racial spells, feats, magic items. Unless the source of the spell specifically says that the spell can be cast using your spellslots then you cannot use your spellslots to cast the spell.

Running Quests: A Guide for DMs

Thinking of running a quest? Wonderful! DMs are what keep Macguffins, Ltd. adventuring, and we want the process to be as straightforward as possible.

Whether you're planning a quick mystery around Luna Pine or a longer journey into the unknown, this guide explains how to get your quest ready, keep it moving, and wrap things up.

If you've been on the server for at least 30 days, completed a quest, and are interested in DMing, speak to an Admin or the Quest Master.

Planning your quest

Before you submit a quest, have a rough idea of its story, the level of characters it suits, how long it might run, and how often you can post. Quests normally appear on the 1st and 15th of the month. If you're unsure whether your idea fits the setting or an existing storyline, have a chat with a Helper, Quest Master, Edgelord or Admin.

When the updated Null quest tools are available on the main server, `/quest submit` will walk you through the application. Until then, use the current DM application process in Discord. The form asks for:

- Length: Fast (1 - 2 weeks), Medium (2 - 4 weeks), or Long (4+ weeks).
- Difficulty: Easy, Normal, Hard, or Dead (character death is possible).
- Level range: Choose the range that best suits your adventure.
- Posting speed: From a few posts per week to several per day.
- Practical details: Your time zone, active hours, quest room, intended release and number of players.
- Quest description and rewards: Give players a clear idea of the adventure and propose XP, gold and any Motes or magic items.

The description is what players will see, so give them something to get excited about without revealing all your surprises! A Helper or authorised staff member will review the application. Once approved, the quest can be published for players to express interest.

The DM and staff choose the party; expressing interest is not a first-come-first-served reservation.

Choosing rewards

Quest rewards are meant to be consistent across DMs without forcing every adventure into the same mould. Use the guide below as a starting point, then consider the actual difficulty, length and loot.

Character level	Typical XP for four weeks
3 - 4	900 - 1,400
5 - 7	1,600 - 2,100
8 - 10	2,300 - 2,900
11 - 13	3,100 - 3,700
14 - 16	3,800 - 4,400
17 - 20	4,500 - 5,500

As a rough guide, a two-week quest earns about half the four-week amount, while a six-week quest earns about one and a half times as much.

For longer quests, scale in proportion to the planned duration. Gold normally starts at around one quarter of the XP, with the value of gold and loot found during the quest taken into account. A common expectation for Motes is around one per week, or an approved equivalent magic item.

These figures are guidelines, not a promise that every quest earns the maximum. If your proposal differs significantly, explain why in a sentence or two. An unusually challenging quest, an adventure that grew well beyond its original scope, or a generous item reward can all be good reasons. Admins and the Quest Master can help with unusual cases.

The application's current reward hints are approximate as they do not calculate or approve rewards for you.

Keeping a play-by-post quest moving

Play-by-post gives everyone time to write and think, but a quest can quickly lose momentum if the party doesn't know what happens next.

Before starting, tell your players what posting speed you expect and ask them to let you know about absences. **Our usual starting point is a response within about 24 hours.** If a player hasn't responded and hasn't mentioned an absence, you may move the scene forward rather than leaving everyone waiting. In most situations their character can be assumed to follow the party. During combat, Dodge is the usual default when their turn must be passed.

Use your judgement if the circumstances call for a different approach and be considerate of absences that have been communicated.

A few habits help enormously:

- Finish posts with a clear question, choice or opportunity to act. If the group needs to decide something, give a sensible deadline and suggest what happens if nobody objects.
- Use emoji reactions for simple OOC votes.
- Consider block initiative so players don't have to wait for one another in a strict queue.
- If someone is away, agree on a practical way to keep their character with the party.

Remember that players are writing together. Leave room for their choices, keep IC and OOC separate, and respect the server's rules on consent and PvP.

Keep Combat Information Together

For complicated encounters, consider maintaining one edited combat-status post.

For example:

```
Round 4
Orpheus — 166/230 HP | Aura of Protection
Ezra — 88/157 HP | Unfailing Inspiration (d10)
Erik — 76/230 HP | Raging | Grappled — DC 16

Party Reminder
+5 to saves while within 10 ft. of Orpheus
```

Update the same post as the encounter changes.

This can keep HP, conditions, ongoing effects, initiative blocks and important reminders visible without players having to search through several days of posts.

Use whatever tools make this easiest for you. Some DMs keep this information manually, while others use tools such as 5e.tools or Avrae.

Finishing your quest

When the adventure ends, confirm the players who participated and the final rewards. When your adventure ends:

1. Confirm which characters participated.
2. Confirm the final XP, gold, Motes and items.
3. Record the appropriate rewards.
4. Let players know what they need to update themselves.
5. Record any lasting changes to the world that another DM may need to know.

On the updated Null quest tools, `/quest finish` will show you a preview and ask you to confirm before posting the closing messages. This command is currently in testing, so follow the existing server closeout process until it is released.

The finish process prepares the OOC thank-you and relevant reward-log posts. It does not automatically update character XP, Motes, gold or roles. Players should continue to follow the usual character and currency instructions.

If the final rewards differ from those approved, include a short explanation. Changes are sometimes perfectly reasonable; the important part is making them clear.

Leaving your mark on Luna Pine

Did the party save a village, make an enemy of a local faction, discover a dangerous ruin or change something other DMs should know about? Please leave a short account of what happened, where, and what changed. A future DM may want to build on it!

A searchable `/world` log is being tested as part of Null's next improvements. It will allow authorised DMs and Helpers to record important outcomes after the quest has been finished. Until that is released, use the existing DM/Helper handover route for persistent changes.

For current server rules and rulings, check The Rules and Common DM Rulings. If you're ever uncertain, ask the Quest Master, an Edgelord or an Admin.

Item Restrictions

These restrictions apply regardless of whether a character uses 2014 or 2024 rules unless a specific entry says otherwise.

Just like any in person or digital table, the DM may impose a variety of restrictions on the players to ensure that their game runs smoothly and is enjoyable for everyone at their table. For example the limitations on the variety of classes or races available during character creation, the availability of optional rules, or the list of items that may be acquired by their players. To ensure a fair playing field for all players from level 3 to 20 and to reduce the stress on our amazing DMs, we have decided to limit or restrict the accessibility of particular items for a variety of reasons. Generally, these are broken down into four main categories, or groups, which include scope, power, balance, and unforeseen circumstances.

Group 1

The following items have been restricted due to being beyond the scope of the server, i.e. items that don't fit the theme of Macguffins, Ltd, end game magic items and beyond

All Legendary and Artefact magic items as well as Smokepowder are not available.

Group 2

The following items have been restricted as they have been deemed too powerful for the style of West Marches experience that we have cultivated.

Item	Rarity
All-Purpose Tool, +1	Uncommon
Amulet of the Devout, +1	Uncommon
Arcane Grimoire, +1	Uncommon
Bloodwell Vial, +1	Uncommon
Dragonhide Belt, +1	Uncommon
Moon Sickle, +1	Uncommon
Rhythm-Maker's Drum, +1	Uncommon

Rod of the Pact Keeper, +1	Uncommon
Wand of Magic Missiles	Uncommon
All-Purpose Tool, +2	Rare
Amulet of the Devout, +2	Rare
Arcane Grimoire, +2	Rare
Bloodwell Vial, +2	Rare
Dragonhide Belt, +2	Rare
Moon Sickle, +2	Rare
Rhythm-Maker's Drum, +2	Rare
Rod of the Pact Keeper, +2	Rare
Cloak of Displacement	Rare
Failed Experiment Wand	Rare
Mantle of Spell Resistance	Rare
Reveler's Concertina	Rare
Ring of Spell Storing	Rare
Wand of Fireballs	Rare
Wand of Lightning Bolts	Rare
All-Purpose Tool, +3	Very Rare
Amulet of the Devout, +3	Very Rare
Arcane Grimoire, +3	Very Rare
Bloodwell Vial, +3	Very Rare
Dragonhide Belt, +3	Very Rare
Moon Sickle, +3	Very Rare
Rhythm-Maker's Drum, +3	Very Rare

Rod of the Pact Keeper, +3	Very Rare
Shield (*), +3	Very Rare
Wand of the War Mage, +3	Very Rare
Weapon, +3	Very Rare
Belt of Fire Giant Strength	Very Rare
Horn of Valhalla, Bronze	Very Rare
Nine Lives Stealer	Very Rare
Robe of Stars	Very Rare
Spellguard Shield	Very Rare
Wand of Polymorph	Very Rare

Group 3

The following items have been restricted because they would pose balancing issues in a West Marches Server. These balancing issues primarily arise through combat encounters because, unlike a table game, the specific DM is not in tune with the specifics capabilities and item interactions of the group of adventurers.

Item	**Rarity**
Broom of Flying	Uncommon
Winged Boots	Uncommon
Docent	Rare
Flying Chariot	Rare
Helm of Teleportation	Rare
Horn of the Endless Maze	Rare
Horn of Valhalla, Brass	Rare
Horn of Valhalla, Silver	Rare
Mind Lash	Rare
Professor Skant	Rare
Rod of Rulership	Rare
Shield of Far Sight	Rare

Wand of Viscid Globs	Rare
Weird Tank	Rare
Wings of Flying	Rare
Amulet of the Planes	Very Rare
Carpet of Flying	Very Rare
Conch of Teleportation	Very Rare
Helm of Devil Command	Very Rare
Ioun Stone, Absorption	Very Rare
Manual of Bodily Health	Very Rare
Manual of Gainful Exercise	Very Rare
Manual of Quickness of Action	Very Rare
Navigation Orb	Very Rare
Orb of the Veil	Very Rare
Peregrine Mask	Very Rare
Ring of Regeneration	Very Rare
Rod of Absorption	Very Rare
Soul Bag	Very Rare
Timepiece of Travel	Very Rare
Tome of Clear Thought	Very Rare
Tome of Leadership and Influence	Very Rare
Tome of Understanding	Very Rare

Group 4

The following items have been restricted because they may cause issues between players and lead to unforeseen circumstances, specifically both intentional and unintentional PvP scenarios.

Item	**Rarity**
Infernal Puzzle Box	Uncommon
Daern's Instant Fortress	Rare
Wand of Wonder	Rare
Devastation Orb of Air	Very Rare
Devastation Orb of Earth	Very Rare
Devastation Orb of Fire	Very Rare

Devastation Orb of Water	Very Rare
Efreeti Bottle	Very Rare
Manual of Clay Golems	Very Rare
Manual of Flesh Golems	Very Rare
Manual of Iron Golems	Very Rare
Manual of Stone Golems	Very Rare
Mirror of Life Trapping	Very Rare

How Are Quests Assigned?

The process we use is the **Gale–Shapley** (aka **deferred acceptance**) algorithm, designed to find stable matches between our group of players and a group of quests with limited slots. The resulting assignment which is most fair by giving players the quest they want most and quests the players it wants most. It is optimal for finding a stable solution such that no player would wish to trade "spots" with another player in a way where both players would be happy with the trade.

In this set-up, our players each have a preference (in the form of your preference vote). Similarly, quests will have a preference for players, focused entirely around a pre-determined "target level" the quest prefers players to be close to.

If all quests have room for all player's first choice, then all players will be placed into the appropriate quest. Unfortunately, life isn't always that simple, and a quest will likely have more people wanting to join than slots available. In this case, the players are selected based on a series of tie-breaking strategies to pick who gets priority.

1. Players always get quests that are resolving a quest request, obviously, or other case-by-case bases
2. Player priority is always most important, so selecting a quest as #1 always get priority over #2
3. Target level preference, where the players who are closest to the quest's target level get priority. Players of the target level get priority, then players who are 1 level off from the target are next, followed by players 2 levels off, etc.
4. In the event players are equally far from the target level (e.g., a quest has target level 4, and has a level 3 and level 5 sign up) priority is given to the lower level player
5. Players of the same level are randomly sorted to avoid any unintentional bias

At this point, the algorithm will have assigned everyone possible to a quest, and the DMs review the spread. A final pass is given to make sure the level spread is as expected.

How do Mounts work?

> **Ruleset note:** Macguffins currently supports both 2014 and 2024 characters. The general mounted-combat rules below apply to both unless otherwise stated. Spell-created mounts such as **Find Steed** work differently depending on the version of the spell your character uses.

Possible Steeds

Horses to be used as steeds can be purchased from Mailee at `#unfamiliar-familiars`. Creatures other than horses require special saddles in order to be ridden, and undomesticated animals/monsters may only be ridden during quests / arenas at DM discretion or if the statblock / item description says they can be ridden.

A creature must generally be willing, at least one size larger than its rider, and physically suited to being ridden before it can function as a mount.

All the listed options in the Find Steed / Find Greater Steed are permitted for those who have that option. If you would like a steed that is not listed in there you can either use a statblock for one of the listed mounts and reflavour it as a similar creature, as long as any special attacks / abilities make sense. If you would like a statblock different from one of the listed mounts for your custom steed then submit a request to #request-board, the DMs will then discuss what would be an appropriate statblock and whether it would be a permissible mount.

> Note: Only non-hostile creatures at least one size category larger than you have any chance of being ride-able.

Find Steed — 2024

The 2024 Find Steed spell uses the Otherworldly Steed stat block.

The steed can resemble a Large rideable animal of your choice, such as a horse, camel, dire wolf or elk. Its appearance does not change its stat block.

While you are riding it in combat, the steed functions as a **controlled mount** and shares your Initiative count, as described by the spell.

If you want the steed to look like something particularly unusual, the creature should still have an anatomy reasonably capable of serving as a mount.

Controlled Mounts

While mounts are in combat there are two options for how they act: Controlled or Independent. Most of the time while you are riding your mount, it will be a **controlled mount**. A controlled mount is effectively an extension of your character. It moves during your turn and the mount can only take the Dash, Disengage, or Dodge actions. It can still take bonus actions and reactions including attacks of opportunity, provided it is physically capable of doing so. E.g. a warhorse requires its hooves to attack, so would be unable to make an AoO if its feet are stuck in quicksand or mud. Controlled mounts are controlled by the player.

Independent Mounts

Intelligent creatures or wild animals are typically always **independent mounts**, but in special circumstances - such as the Find Steed spell - may consent to become a controlled mount. Independent mounts roll their own initiative and act on their own turn, but have access to all actions including making attacks. However, you may be required to make an ability check to get an independent mount to follow your instructions. Independent mounts may choose to flee combat, or throw off their riders of their own accord and are controlled by the DM.

Items and Mounts

Controlled mounts can wear barding and other equipment designed for them, but **cannot** wield weapons nor use magic items (except items specifically designed for mounts). Independent mounts may be able to use other objects, at DM discretion.

Frequently Asked Questions

D&D 5e is not especially good at explaining mounts and mounted combat, here are some of the most common questions.

How big is my mount?

A Medium creature fills a 1x1 square on a battlemap and can only be ridden by Small or smaller creatures.

A Large creature fills a 2x2 square on a battlemap grid, while riding a Large mount you are treated as occupying all of those squares for the purpose of attack reach and AoOs.

A Huge creature fills a 3x3 square on a battlemap grid, while a Medium or smaller creature is riding a Huge mount you are normally treated as occupying the entire 3x3 square for the purpose of attack reach and AoOs. However, your DM may choose to treat you as occupying the central square of a Huge mount - be sure to ask which rule they use.

Can “X” be my mount?

In general, creatures that can fly, or cause status effects (other than “prone”) such as ‘poisoned’ or ‘restrained’ are not allowed as mounts, unless given by a DM for use only during a specific quest.

Examples

Example: “I ride up to the Orc and attack him with my sword.”

Controlled mount: the mount moves as part of your turn, you use your action on your turn to make your attack making two (or more attacks) if you have the Extra Attack feature. The mount cannot attack, but may Disengage and continue moving after you have attacked.

Independent mount:

On your turn: You use your movement and bonus action, then Hold Action to attack once in range of the Orc, then instruct your mount to approach the Orc.

On mount’s turn: The mount uses its movement to get within 5ft of the Orc, triggering your held action. You use your reaction to make a single attack against the Orc, (Extra Attack only applies to attacks on your turn.) Your mount can then make its attack against the Orc.

How does Animate Dead work?

Applies to both 2014 and 2024 characters

Creating Undead

Currently, you are permitted to create undead creatures during quests or arenas with the permission of the DM or using downtime (see: Downtime Rules for details). You cannot create undead inside of Luna Pine during RP. If you wish to convert a fresh corpse into bones, so that you may raise a skeleton instead of a zombie, this would typically require 1 hour worth of work by 1 creature.

You must adhere to the rules of the relevant spells : i.e. the corpse must be of a humanoid or beast of the appropriate size. This means any of your undead creatures that are reduced to 0 hp cannot be reanimated as their creature type has changed to “undead”.

Undead Stats / Equipment

Undead creatures use their published stat block. Individual DMs may allow undead to wear other non-magical equipment or use magic items during their quest / arena, but this is not the default. Undead not specified in the spell cannot be created - e.g. animating the bones of a minotaur does not create a Minotaur Skeleton.

Undead in Luna Pine and Towns

In general, undead creatures that are under the control of a necromancer are permitted in Luna Pine. You may RP with 1-2 undead creatures in the rp areas, however other player characters may justifiably believe undead to be innately evil creatures and wish to destroy them. Please be considerate and courteous to such player characters.

We recommend necromancers either leave their undead outside of towns or have a means to hide / carry the undead creatures while inside towns, such as a bag of holding / portable hole or a specially designed homebrew item (make a request in #request-board to be considered to receive such an item). See table below for size capacity for each type of container:

Item	Zombie	Skeleton	Exit Speed

Bag of Holding	⅓ of the bag, max 3 / bag	⅙ of the bag, max 6 / bag	Can be turned inside out to empty as 1 action
Portable Hole	1/12 of the hole, max 12 / hole	1/24 of the hole, max 24 / hole	3 exit per round.

Stores of rotting corpses, or uncontrolled undead creatures are not permitted in Luna Pine. If you run out of spell slots to maintain your undead horde during a quest or an arena then it is assumed any undead in excess of those you can control are immediately destroyed.

Multiple timelines

It may happen that you create new undead or some of your undead may be destroyed in one timeline (quest / arena) while you have other undead in another timeline. Undead cannot travel through timelines, so any undead created in an arena while you are in a quest cannot be added to those you have in the quest, likewise undead destroyed in an arena does not affect the number you have on a quest that is already running. And vice-versa, undead destroyed in a quest don't affect the number you have available for an arena until that quest ends.

When quests / arenas end, you must update the number of undead you have available for any new scenes you may join.

To track your undead available to you when you start a new scene / quest / arena, you must record the number of undead of each type you had at the start of each quest / arena before combat begins. Then when any particular instance ends you compare your number undead at the end of that instance to the number of undead at the start. This is your net gain / loss of undead, e.g. if you started a quest with 5 zombies and finished the quest with 10 zombies you have a net gain of 5 zombies.

You then apply that net change to your current set of available undead.

Example 1: Wiz starts with 3 zombies and 3 skeletons. Wiz joins a quest and an arena.

During the arena: 1 zombie and 2 skeletons are destroyed.

The arena ends first, at which point Wiz has 2 zombies and 1 skeleton left.

During the quest: 3 zombies are destroyed.

When the quest ends, Wiz updates his total undead minions to be 1 remaining skeleton.

Example 2: Wiz starts with 3 zombies and 3 skeletons. Wiz joins a quest and an arena.

During the arena: 0 zombies and 1 skeletons are destroyed.

The arena ends first, at which point Wiz has 3 zombies and 2 skeletons left.

During the quest: 2 zombies and 2 skeletons are destroyed, and the Wiz animates 4 new zombies

When the quest ends, Wiz has 5 zombies and no skeletons left.

Create Undead Spell

When you reach the level where you can cast "Create Undead" then you can create more powerful undead creatures: wights, ghasts, ghouls, and mummies these follow the same rules laid out above, and are considered equivalent to zombies for storage purposes. Undead such as wights that are able to create permanent undead under their own control by killing other creatures can only do so during quests or arenas as such acts can have serious implications.

Guidance on Battlerager Subclass (Legacy)

We hear at MacGuffins Ltd. have recognized that the Battlerager subclass of Barbarian is poorly supported in the RAW rules, and creates some unique difficulties interacting with systems on the server. Therefore, we have developed the special guidance and home-brew rulings detailed below to enable this unique subclass to function on the server.

Racial Restriction

Since Tasha's Cauldron of Everything the racial restrictions on Bladesinger were removed by WotC, however the same was not extended to the Battlerager. We believe this is against the spirit of the game that WotC is trying to make thus here at MacGuffins, any race/species can choose to follow the Path of the Battlerager. However, we encourage character choosing this route to have some kind of background connection to dwarves from whom they may have learned this unique subclass.

Magic Item Compatibility

The Battlerager subclass is built around wearing and using spiked armour as both protection and as a weapon in combat. However, RAW spiked armour is treated exclusively as armour which makes it impossible to upgrade the weapon attack associated with the spiked armour with magic items unlike all other weapons. Thus here at MacGuffins we have ruled:

> The spikes of the "spiked armour" of the Battlerager subclass are treated as a 'melee weapon' for the purposes of magical items. Thus any magic item that can be any generic weapon - e.g. +1 weapon, +2 weapon, Dragon Wrath Weapon - can be used as spikes attached to the battlerager's armour. When such a magic item is attached, any bonus to damage rolls only affect attacks make with the spikes. Whereas only +1,+2, or +3 magic bonuses granted to the spikes affect the damage dealt to creatures grappled by the battlerager.
>
> Note that: spikes of the spiked armour can be treated as weapons for the purposes of artificer infusions or casting spells.

This means that a +1 AC spiked armour can be obtained from Kronk at a cost of 1000gp+cost of spiked armour, +1 attack/damage spikes can be purchased from Kronk for an additional 1000gp.

Attacking with Spikes

To be consistent with our ruling that the spikes of the spiked armour are considered weapons, and in consideration of the relative weakness of the design of the Battlerager subclass, we have additionally ruled that the spikes of the spiked armour can be used to make attacks with your Action by characters with at least 6 levels of Battlerager while they are raging.