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How to scale monsters from level 1 to level 20

XP, Health and Average Damage scaling

This chart will work with scaling monsters within a Dungeons and DragonsTM adventure.

Please read the accompanying essay for a complete explanation on how to use it.

This chart available at GlendorsRPGAdventures.com/scaling_1_to_20/

Level	Average XP Value	Average Health	Health (Min to Max)	Average Damage Per Round	Damage P/Round (Min to Max)
1	200	26	13 to 39	9	4.5 to 13
2	440	41	20 to 61	14	7 to 21
3	680	56	28 to 84	19	9.5 to 28
4	950	71	35 to 106	24	12 to 36
5	1500	86	43 to 129	29	14 to 43
6	2200	101	50 to 151	34	17 to 51
7	2950	116	58 to 174	39	19 to 58
8	3800	131	65 to 196	44	22 to 66
9	4800	146	73 to 219	49	24 to 73
10	5900	161	80 to 241	54	27 to 81
11	7000	176	88 to 264	59	29 to 88
12	8200	191	95 to 286	64	32 to 96
13	9900	206	103 to 309	69	34 to 103
14	11700	221	110 to 331	74	37 to 111
15	13600	236	118 to 354	79	39 to 118
16	15600	251	125 to 376	84	42 to 126
17	17750	266	133 to 399	89	44 to 133
18	20000	281	140 to 421	94	47 to 141
19	22400	296	148 to 444	99	49 to 148
20	25000	311	155 to 466	104	52 to 156

How to use the above chart:

A Brown Bear in the D&DTM universe is a level 1 challenge rating.

It has 34 hit points and is worth 200 xp.

It makes 2 attacks: 1x Claw (11 damage; 2d6 +4) and 1x Bite (8 damage; 1d8 +4)

To convert the Brown Bear to a level 15 difficulty, assign the values listed in the above chart:

Level 15 Brown Bear

XP Value: 13,600

Health: 236

Damage per round: 79

Keep in mind the numbers (health 236) and damage per round (79) are averages. The health can fall in the range between 118 to 354, and the damage per round can fall in the range of 39 to 118 should you prefer to assign those values through rolling dice.

For this example, let's just use the base numbers of 236 health and 79 damage per round.

For single and multiple attacks per round:

For the damage per round of 79, you will need to further break that down based on how many attacks the Brown Bear makes.

If it makes only one attack per round, such as Bite, then it will inflict 79 points of damage for its attack.

If it makes 1x Bite and 1x Claw attack per round, then the damage will be 1/2 of 79 for each, or 39.5 damage per each attack. If you decide the Claw attack should do more damage, then just weight it accordingly: the Claw inflicts 50 damage and the Bite inflicts 29 damage.

For periodic attacks:

Let's say our level 15 Brown Bear is a magically enhanced Fire Breathing Brown Bear that has the following attacks: 1x Bite per round, 1x Claw per round and 1x Fire Breath every 3 rounds

Here's how to determine the damage values for each attack:

#1) Determine the total amount of damage based on the frequency of the periodic attack.

Since Fire Breath is performed every 3 rounds, multiply the damage per round (79) x 3 (rounds). That equals 237 points of damage. Now you know that your level 15 Fire Breathing Brown Bear should inflict a total amount of 237 points of damage over the course of three rounds.

#2) Determine how strong you want the Fire Breath to be.

Should it be a mild amount of damage, such as 10 points? Or should it be a game changing amount of damage like 100 points to anyone standing in the flame's 10-foot path?

If you decide that Fire Breath inflicts 100 points of damage, then subtract 100 from 237.

That leaves 137 points of damage to be inflicted over 3 rounds from other attacks.

Take 137 and divide it by 3, and you get roughly 45.5 points of damage per round to be allocated to other attacks.

3) As determined in Step 2, you have 45.5 points of damage per round to allocate to other attacks.

Since we know the bear performs 1x Bite and 1x Claw attack, you can simply divide 45.5 by 2 and you get (rounding up) 23 points of damage per each attack per round. If you believe Claw should do more damage, then assign 30 points of damage to the Claw attack and 16 to the Bite.

You now have these assigned damage values per attack for a level 15 Fire Breathing Brown Bear:

1x Claw per round inflicts 30 points of damage

1x Bite per round inflicts 16 points of damage

1x Fire Breath once per 3 rounds inflicts 100 points of damage to anyone in its path

Periodic abilities - especially AOE types - are capable of inflicting extreme amounts of damage and can easily break out of the above chart's damage averages.

Example:

If an entire party of 5 adventurers decide to perform a group hug in front of a fire-breathing adversary, then the above-described Level 15 Fire Breathing Brown Bear will not only inflict its average 237 points of damage every three rounds to the first person in line, but it will also inflict an additional 100 points of damage to each of the remaining 4 members of the party, thus inflicting a massive amount of 637 points of damage over 3 rounds.

What about spells?

As in the example above with Fire Breath, spell damage is included in the creature's average damage per combat round. All types of damage are included in the "average damage per round" number.

What about crowd control abilities?

When monsters have the ability to not only charm a player character but actually control one and have the character fight on its side, the difficulty rating should get bumped a few levels because an encounter of 4 vs 1 quickly becomes a 3 vs 2 scenario. These types of abilities become even more dangerous when an adversary has multiple crowd control options such as controlling a player character, moving oneself to another plane (or depositing a player character there), teleporting, stunning or incapacitating a player character by any means. With multiple crowd control abilities, a 4 vs 1 scenario can easily become a 2 vs 3 or even a 1 vs 3 situation with 1 player character momentarily out of commission. Be careful with crowd control abilities as one or two rounds of such an encounter can decimate a party rather quickly.

Suggestions for increasing difficulty rating when a monster has crowd control abilities:

Ability: Subdue a player character (sleep, charm, freeze, etc.) **Add +2 levels to the difficulty rating**

Ability: Control a player character so that he/she fights on the side of the monster **Add +4 levels to difficulty rating**

Reasoning:

When a player character is subdued, the party's overall damage-per-round has just been reduced by 20% to 25%.

When a player character is controlled and forced to fight on the side of the monster, the party's overall damage has just been reduced by 20% to 25% **and** the monsters damage-per-round has just been increased by 20% to 25%.

Crowd control abilities are the most dangerous abilities available to monsters/NPCs. This is particularly true if the GM is adept at combat strategies.

What about immunities and resistances?

This is where we get into the grey area. There's no hard line of immunities and resistances when it comes to difficulty level. It's up to you, the GM, to assign those benefits or weaknesses as needed.

In the interest of balance, if a creature has a higher-than-average damage per combat round, then it would be a good idea to minimize its immunities/resistances. On the flip side, if a creature has very low damage per round, feel free to give it an interesting variety of resistances and immunities. The same applies for high or low levels of health; assign immunities/resistances to balance things out.

There should always be at least one avenue of weakness (or two) for an adversary. A balanced party composition should be rewarded with being able to overcome almost any obstacle (within reason) due to the wide variety of talents at their disposal.

Scaling Example of a level 15 Fire Breathing Brown Bear when adding Mind Control

Let's say our Level 15 Fire Breathing Brown Bear has the above mentioned attack abilities:

1x Claw per round inflicts 30 points of damage

1x Bite per round inflicts 16 points of damage

1x Fire Breath once per 3 rounds inflicts 100 points of damage to anyone in its path

As if those attack abilities were not enough, the GM decides to give the Fire Breathing Brown Bear the ability to mind control a player character for 5 rounds and force them to fight on its side the very first round.

So, how do you determine the true difficulty rating of that level 15 Fire Breathing Brown Bear with Mind Control?

You have two approaches:

#1 - Keep all the stats for a level 15 monster, give it Mind Control and establish the monster's true difficulty at level 19 (+4 difficulty for the Mind Control ability). Change the XP value to 22,400 but leave everything else alone.

#2 - Reduce the damage values to a level 11 monster per the chart (176 health and 59 damage) and by adding the Mind Control ability, the effective level of the Fire Breathing Brown Bear with Mind Control is a level 15. Make sure the XP value stays at 13,600.

As long as you follow the process in a step-by-step manner, difficulty scaling is pretty easy.