Combat Procedure

In the AD&D world, a group's initiative system is a major determining factor in their style of play. There are different ways to interpret and make sense of the combat system described in the AD&D rulebooks, and this is ours. For more info on how we arrived here, see our initiative experiment.

Procedure

Phase 1: Opening

Reaction, surprise, distance, morale.

Phase 2: Surprise

If there is surprise, declarations and resolutions occur as normal for each individual surprise segment.

Phase 3: Regular

1. DM notes monster and hireling actions.
2. Players declare PC and henchman actions. Note that with this system, **declaring several types of actions A-H is possible, provided they do not conflict**. For example, moving and then discharging a magic device is permissible. In contrast, closing to melee and then attacking is illegal since the only way to close and attack in the same round is via a charge.
3. Both sides roll d6. **The face shown on the die indicates the segment where that side begins to act (so lower is better).**
4. Actions are resolved. Actions cannot be changed at this point, but they can be canceled.
   1. Movement is resolved on a per segment basis. **1/10th MV per segment.**
   2. For weapons with **RoF greater than 1, subsequent shots come two segments after the previous.** (Excludes surprise segments.)
   3. In case of a charge, melee attacks **(and only melee attacks!)** are resolved in order of weapon length.
   4. On tied initiative, speed factor is checked as normal.
   5. Multiple attack routine advantage (including sweep attacks) is affected by the opponent's initiative. Routines before the disadvantaged side's attack(s) go on the advantaged side's initiative segment OR the segment before the disadvantaged side (whichever is earlier). Routines after the disadvantaged side go in the segment after the disadvantaged side's initiative segment.

Phase 4: Reset

1. Characters who reached 0 or fewer HP on a previous round (who have not been stabilized) lose 1 HP.
2. If combat has been ended, play moves to either (1) pursuit rules, or (2) 1 turn post-combat rest.

During post-combat rest, no exploration can take place, but bleeding can be staunched, spells can be cast, and prisoners tied up.

3. If combat has not been ended, move to phase 3. **Actions which were started on this round which did not complete (e.g. spell, movement, retrieving an item) continue into the next round unless canceled!**

Q & A

- What happened to melee vs caster ignoring initiative and instead comparing weapon speed vs spellcasting segments?
    - I'm not sure if/how that fits into this system. For now, it is gone.
- What happened to caster vs caster ignoring initiative and instead comparing spellcasting segments vs spellcasting segments?
    - I'm not sure if/how that fits into this system. For now, it is gone.
- Does this mean that I will move less than my full movement distance if my side starts on segment 2 or later?
    - Yes, if movement starts this round. If you were already moving to a declared destination on a previous round, you will continue that movement on segment 1, even if your party's initiative die says 2-6.
- What happens if I charge but I don't make it to my target point?
    - If you have remaining charge distance left, the charge will continue on segment 1 of the next round. However, if you have expended all of your charge distance at any point, the charge stops. (Note that this differs from how I hand-waived it on our Wednesday trial, where I just let the charge keep going.)
- Isn't ranged fire and turning heavily nerfed now that it doesn't automatically beat charges?
    - Perhaps, though this is how many AD&D groups do charges. I'm inclined to try it this way because I want to absolutely minimize the "quantum" aspects of initiative as we try this system.
- Isn't it weird that with multiple attack routines, the advantaged side's later attacks are effectively slower (come on a later segment) if the disadvantaged side has a worse initiative?
    - Yes, that does seem weird. Though I haven't produced a better solution yet which still ensures multiple attack routines work they way they are supposed to in the rules (before and after). Perhaps it's not weird though, perhaps the advantaged side's latter attacks are enabled by the disadvantaged side getting close for their attack?
- What happens with reaction modifier for ranged fire?
    - It means action is taken on an earlier or later segment, as early as "segment 0".
- Is there a problem where spellcasters can avoid melee hits by going later, and therefore worse initiative is actually better in some cases?
    - No, because being hit at all during a round before the spell finishes causes the spell to be lost. Even if actual casting hasn't started yet, all segments up to that point are used preparing to cast (e.g. retrieving components). This is the same reason that casters cannot move on a round that they want to cast a spell, until the spell is complete.
- What happens if a spell starts on segment 5 and it takes 7 segments to cast?
    - Casting continues into the next round and the spell can complete on segment 2 of that following round.
- What happens if I finish a spell I started on the previous round? Am I allowed to cast a different spell this round?
    - Yes. The rule is that you can only begin casting a single spell on a round. (Note that this is different than how I ruled on our trial run during the Wednesday session.)

Differences from ADDICT

There are two major changes you should be aware of, from which everything else stems:

1. For initiative, **the face shown on your die is the segment on which your side begins to act.** This means lower is better.
2. **You can do more varied declarations, as long as the rules don't prohibit it.** For example, you can move and then fire a wand. You could also parley while moving. You could even move after you finish casting a spell. But you could not close to striking distance and then melee, since moving and meleeing is only allowed via the charge. You could also not start casting two spells in the same round.

References

- **Interesting quote here:** Close to striking (E): "All normal activity and bonuses are permitted when so doing. This action is typically taken when the opponent is over 1" distant but not a long distance away. Play goes to the next round after this, as melee is not possible, although **other activity can, of course, take place such as that detailed above.**"
- **Useful section to read:** Actions During Combat And Similar Time-Important Situations (DMG 71)

History

Starting in late March 2024, after using for ~1.5 years, we began trialing the system that became our current combat procedure.

For the first ~1.5 years of our campaign, we used our ADDICT combat procedure, an initiative system most in line with what is called "A.D.D.I.C.T." or "quantum" initiative. However, in late March 2024, we are set out to try an alternative system based on things like (1) the way Gary and TSR conventions were reported to have played by the 1982 or earlier, (2) OSRIC style, (3) Anthony Huso's initiative system.

We decided to trial this system for these reasons:

- Players interested in having more meaningful choices to make in combat, to add depth. DM interested in the cool interactions that could result.
- Dissatisfaction on both sides of the DM screen with certain results of the hard-line "you go then I go" initiative.
- With ADDICT/quantum initiative, it's hard (or impossible) to tell what segment things happen on. Also, stuff like potions taking effect and scroll reading time and item retrieval are often inconsequential.
- One of this group's core tenants is exploring and improving at AD&D, and thereby making our game as enjoyable as possible. It seems right to experiment with initiative.

After using the system for some months, we ran a internal poll and found that all players who voted preferred or strongly preferred the new system. So we adopted it permanently.

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