

Helpless

The term “helpless” is used in multiple places throughout the books, including in the description of [stinking cloud](#). However, “keyword mechanics” were not really a thing in AD&D, and so some interpretation is needed to establish a defined meaning for the word. Since helplessness is very deadly, it is critical that everyone at the table has a solid definition.

Non-magical sleep is a type of “helpless”.

Helplessness is not quite as bad as being [held](#) (which includes magical sleep), because a helpless creature can often still move.

Attacks against a helpless creature

An attacker targeting a helpless opponent during an active combat automatically hits.¹⁾

However, if the attacker is classed, they may choose to make an [assassination](#) attempt, regardless of their class. In such a case, regular weapon damage is still applied on failure. So unless an attacker does not want the target dead, this is always the better option, since it automatically hits as well.²⁾

Movement

Depends on what caused the helplessness. In the case of a [grapple](#), of course the target can't use their [MV](#). But in the case of [stinking cloud](#), nothing is restricting movement.

Charging is not allowed in any case.

Attacking, casting spells, using devices

Helpless creatures cannot take any D or G actions (attacking, spells, devices, turning).

¹⁾

DMG 72.

²⁾

DMG 75.

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