

THE INCREDIBLE WORLD OF DOORS & LOCKS



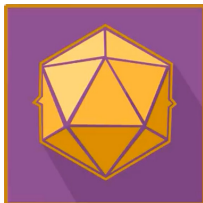
Incredible might be a strong word for it



THE INCREDIBLE WORLD OF DOORS & LOCKS

By Martín Davico

To my friends that put up with
my constant barrage of minor
changes and ideas. Thanks for
actually taking the time to
give me your opinion.



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Introduction

Inter with me into the incredible world of doors and locks. Okay, let's be real here, doors are far from the most exciting thing you'll have in your campaign. But a door can be a powerful tool, and my purpose with this supplement is to show the many ways in which a well-thought-out entrance can improve your game.

So, what does this supplement offer?

Well, first off, a way of thinking. You'll find that doors can be much more than simple entrances, they can hint as to what is to come, give players information about the context of its surroundings, or even portray someone's personality. And with this, you can subtly construct a more cohesive narrative for your group.

Afterwards you'll find different approaches to getting through a locked door. What variables you could consider for lowering or raising the difficulty of getting past it, different ways of challenging your players' problem-solving abilities, and an alternative view on lockpicking in general.

Finally, you'll find lists of examples for different doors to use in your games, as well as a list of interesting features. Everything from regular everyday doors to doors altered by magic, all complete with difficulty and magical properties.

However, if you were looking for a rules-heavy kind of supplement, this is not for you. The rules contained in this document are meant to assist the narrative and, while they are reliable, you'll find that they are not as rigid as your regular 5th edition rules.

The way to better doors

Every entrance has an intent. There are doors for everyone to use, big and always open; others are for a few to know about, hidden behind book-shelves or stone.

Whenever a door is built its intent is taken into consideration by the builder, every inch of the entrance serves this intentionality. A city gate is made for many to use at the same time, only to be open from the inside, and to keep those inside safe. Therefore, a city gate must be of large dimensions, sturdy as to sustain quite a bit of damage before going down and its locking system should be out of the reach of anyone outside the city.

Now, what about a sealed temple trapping a dangerous beast? Well, we have intentionality already: we must keep the monster trapped inside. So, the gate must be sufficiently strong to endure the constant attacks of the creature trapped within, it's made for no one to use ever again yet it must be at least as large as the creature so that it could get in. Its locking system should be outside, forgoing a key in favor of a more reliable construction. And finally, it should be menacing on the outside to discourage people from going in, and it should be dangerous on the inside to deter the creature from attacking the door.

Both are very similar doors. Large, sturdy and the locking system is placed just on one side. However, when intentionality is taken into consideration, they can be completely different, and when that happens we can take those differences and make them something unique, memorable, and that fulfills a narrative purpose. That's what this is all about.

Identifying intentionality

When I say intentionality, I don't mean purpose. The purpose of a door is always the same: it lets some people in and some people out. If it allows all people to go through, you might as well have a hole. Otherwise, if it lets everyone out, you might as well have a wall.

Intentionality doesn't refer to what the door can actually be used for but rather for what it was built for. Going back to the temple gate example, you could use the door for getting in and out of the temple and leave it there. But that defeats the purpose of the exercise.

This distinction is important because what we are looking for is those details that come up when you think about what was the door made for; to then take those details and come up with a narrative reason for them. Without those details, every door is practically the same as the next one.

Building your doors

Once you identify the intentionality of the construction, pick one or two traits that could go well in relation with it or the people living inside (if it applies). Then build upon it. For example, if your trait is that the door is old and not well-kept, then probably the lock is rusty, easily lockpicked, and makes a lot of noise when opened. And that tells you about whomever this building belongs to and how they care about the place.

Not every door needs to be relevant either. The best practice here is to take the entrances of places you know the contents/inhabitants of and give the door some quality that subtly informs about them. You could also do it the other way around, picking a defining feature of an entrance and then using it to define who/what lives there. You can find a list of door features at the end of the supplement.

Every lock has a key

The easiest way to get through a locked door is with the right key, yet every time a player wants to get somewhere they shouldn't be in, they have to break in. Keys are discreet, easy to hide, do not leave marks, and are extremely easy to copy. So of course, everyone would use a key if they could, but the issue is more as to where the key is, and actually recovering it. And that can be a whole adventure on its own.

People usually have more than one copy of a key, they give them to people they trust or hide them in places no one else would know about. Of course, most people carry a copy of each key with them at every moment, but those are a bit harder to obtain. Whenever you think about making a challenge out of getting through a door, you should consider that those keys exist and can potentially be an entertaining and novel way for your players to beat your challenge. There are a lot of reasons and excuses you could give someone as to why a key is in a particular place or being carried by a specific person, so let's tackle that.

Choose the highest mental Ability score of the owner of the key or roll in the "Where is the spare key?" table to determine a possible location for a spare key.

d6 Highest Mental Ability score Where is the spare key?

1-2	Intelligence	The owner of the key has one or more copies hidden close to the door. Use Table A to determine where it could be hidden.
3-4	Wisdom	The owner of the key has a trick to opening the door without the key. Use Table B to determine what the trick is.
5-6	Charisma	The owner of the key has given one or more copies to close friends or family . Use Table C to determine who has it.

Once you've done that, you can use tables A, B, and C to more specifically define where the key is. Just remember that the tables offer a limited range of options and that you should consider expanding on the ideas presented for you if you're planning on making heavy use of this tool.

d8 Table A. The key is hidden

- 1 On top of door frame, just out of reach for a medium creature.
- 2 Beneath a heavy object close to the entrance (flower pot, welcome mat, bust, rock).
- 3 Inside a hollowed brick on the wall.
- 4 Hanging from a chain inside the gutter.
- 5 Inside a hole in the trunk or branch of a nearby tree.
- 6 Buried on a flower pot, or near a tree or brush.
- 7 Resting beneath a loose tile or plank.
- 8 Glued under a garden table or chair.

d8 Table B. The door has a trick

- 1 When you tuck the handle upwards and pull, the door unlocks.
- 2 If you hold the handle down for a minute, the door unlocks.
- 3 Shaking the door a lot just unlocks it.
- 4 You can use the symbol to a specific god as a key.
- 5 Heating up the lock unlocks it, but it can't be closed until it cools down.
- 6 There's a tiny piece of silk sticking out of the door frame, the door opens up if you pull from it.
- 7 You can use an umbrella through the transom window to open the door.
- 8 The window isn't locked.

d8 Table C. Someone else has a key

- 1 Lover or ex-lover.
- 2 An old friend of the family.
- 3 A family member someplace else within the city.
- 4 The local locksmith.
- 5 The house's previous owner.
- 6 A person staying in the house that has yet to return the key.
- 7 Someone contracted to fix something within the house.
- 8 A friendly neighbor.

Creating your own criteria

If you feel that the tables provided aren't enough, you can come up with your own locations for the spare key, following these guidelines:

- First of all, establish how a person thinks to know where they could have a spare key. This is often too much of a hassle, and an easy way to define a person's way of thinking using game-mechanics is to determine their highest mental Ability score.
- Then, using this information, decide how this way of thinking would come into play when hiding a spare key. For example, a charismatic person usually has one or two other people that they know they can trust, so it would make sense that they leave a key with one of them instead of hiding it.
- Finally, if it applies, look for ways in which you can use the terrain to conceal this key. If the person hiding it has a high intelligence score, it's very likely that they won't hide it under the welcome mat, being that it's the first place everyone looks.

To give a more complete example, if the local cleric is hiding the key of the temple and we have determined that his highest mental Ability score is Wisdom, then probably they have a way of getting into the temple that doesn't require a key. If instead, we decided on Intelligence for their highest mental Ability score, then it's probably hidden somewhere near the entrance.

As with the doors, we can take details about this people to further build upon their way of thinking. If this cleric has a blind devotion to a specific deity, then maybe the key is in a place where the statue of this deity can watch over it. The trick here is that you can make it as intricate or as simple as you want.



Doors as challenges

Be it because it fits your narrative, your party's skillset, or that you just like the idea, you've decided that you want to make a challenge out of getting through a door. That being the case, there are a few things you should consider.

Threats

First, let's establish something: failing to open a door is not a punishment in itself, but rather a "try again or give up" scenario. When your rogue fails to open a door for the third time, well it's not a problem really, just a nuisance. For it to be a problem, there must be a looming threat that makes every failure a critical factor in determining whether or not the players achieve their goals. These can be dangerous things like being noticed by the guard or getting crushed by a giant boulder, or they can be less so, like the owner of the building returning home and your party having to deal with witnesses.

The key (I'm not sorry) lies in determining the stakes early on, that way you can weave the results of success or failure into a narrative context and keep on building the scene. "What could this threat be?" I conveniently write here. Well, I'm glad I asked. The impending trouble that your players will have to deal with can be almost anything, so I made a table because that's what I do. Roll on the Looming Threat table to determine what will befall your players should they fail the challenge.

d8 Looming Threat	
1	The structure is damaged, and it's coming down.
2	A creature/person that lives in the building is soon to return.
3	Someone saw the players and called the authorities/an enemy.
4	A harmful substance is filling the building room by room.
5	A party member/NPC is poisoned and needs an antidote to survive.
6	A sleeping creature is about to wake up and attack the players.
7	There's some kind of explosive about to blow up.
8	Someone that's not supposed to see the players there is about to. Having serious social ramifications.

Creating your own criteria

There are three parts to every threat that you should consider. These are the premise, the presentation, and the climax.

- The premise is what you tell your players is going to happen and how your players should understand what you present. So, the fact that the building is going to collapse and crush the party is your premise. It might be a complete lie, and that's okay.

- Presentation is what it sounds like: how are you going to present this threat to your players? You must convey in some way that this threat exists and that your players need to either hurry or deal with it. If you don't, they will fail your challenge. There's not a lot of advice I can give you about this, as for its very situational nature, but one or two hints in your narration when describing the place should be enough. Just remember that if no one seems to pick up on it, you can always just tell them what the threat is or make their characters know based on ability checks.
- Finally, the Climax is what actually happens when your players succeed at or fail the challenge. The premise and climax can be the same thing, but D&D is a lot of smoke and mirrors, and it's better for you to know in advance if you want to incorporate a plot twist. Using the same collapsing building example, instead of killing your players, you might want them to get trapped underground having to find another way out. And that's a good thing, you can and should change the expected outcome of a failed challenge because the essential part is not the resolution, but how it develops.

Timers

A timer is your way of controlling the speed in which such a threat becomes a reality, and it serves as a physical reminder of how close you are to its climax. To set it up, pick a die. The number of faces on your die determine the difficulty of the challenge, the lower the number, the harder it gets. Whenever your players either succeed or fail at something related to the challenge, you may tick down your die. When you're out of faces, the threat becomes a reality.

Now, the important thing here is that whenever the timer ticks down, something relating to the threat in relation to the challenge happens. For example, if you determined that the building is collapsing, you can make use of that as your player fails to pick the lock, explaining how the shaking of the structure causes him to fail. Otherwise, if your player managed to open the door, mention how the door opens just in time to jump across as a piece of masonry falls where they stood a second ago. It doesn't have to affect the game in any way, but it's a narrative tool to move the situation forward and add tension.

You're looking for opportunities to move the threat closer to the situation, making it ever present and building up tension until you release it when your players either succeed or fail. Your objective shouldn't necessarily be to make your players confront this threat, but to keep it looming ever larger during the scene.

It's important to note that reaching the end of your timer doesn't necessarily mean that your challenge is over, just that the threat becomes reality.

Dice	Timer difficulty
d12	Easy
d10	Regular
d8	Tough
d6	Hard
d4	Impossible

Dual difficulty

These challenges feed on game flow. The tension can only build up for as long as the scene keeps moving forward. Sadly, the black and white nature of ability checks stops this flow on its track whenever a player fails to do something, and we don't want that.

So, going back to doors, most of the time you're not trying to punish the act of opening the door, but instead, being careless about it. For me, I like to let the players succeed and add some nuisance that, if not resolved, will likely become a problem later. This punishing factors might be things like breaking the lock, making too much noise, leaving a mark, or more immediate things like triggering a trap or alarm. Other people prefer more immediate punishment, like a fireball to the face or a cloud of poisonous gas. Therefore, we don't actually need to prevent the players from opening the door.

Use the Difficulty table to determine a Problematic Difficulty Class and a Safe Difficulty Class for your lock. If a player attempting to open the door meets either of those numbers, the door opens. However, if a player would open a door while not reaching the Safe DC, there's some kind of problem while doing so. In that case, choose a punishing factor or roll in the Possible repercussions table to determine what happens.

d4	Difficulty	Problematic DC	Safe DC
1	Fairly easy	Automatic Success	10
2	About regular	12	15
3	Pretty hard	17	20
4	Impossible	Automatic Failure	25

d10 Possible repercussions

1	A trap is triggered.
2	An alarm is triggered.
3	The lock breaks, and it can't be closed.
4	The door makes an awful lot of noise when opened.
5	A vase falls from a shelf, giving you an opportunity to catch it.
6	There's a dog napping just on the other side of the door.
7	You leave a very noticeable mark on the handle or the wood.
8	Your thieves' tools break, you need new ones.
9	Someone saw you. You have little time before the authorities show up (Set a new timer).
10	There's a scared child on the other side.

Additionally, you might use the Condition table to increase or decrease the challenge. Keep in mind that, in most cases, a new lock is easier to deal with than an old one.

d6	Condition	DC Modifier
1-2	Well kept	+0
3-4	Old and rusty	+3
5-6	Jammed	Additional Athletics check

Creating your own criteria

Like the previous time, if you feel like the tables provided aren't enough, you can easily craft your own Conditions, Difficulties, and Repercussions, following these guidelines.

Conditions

- The first thing you should define is the conditions or specific features of your lock. These are things that could later make it easier or harder for your players to open the lock or somehow affect the possible repercussions.

Difficulties

- With the lock's conditions in mind, all you have to do now is define what number do the players have to roll to open the door. This number represents the Problematic DC, meaning that when a player satisfies it, the door will open, but a problem is likely to arise.
- After that, you should set a Safe DC. A number the players have to roll to open the door without any problems. It should be a higher number than the last, and it represents that the players were careful when opening the lock, so there shouldn't be any immediate repercussions.

Repercussions

- Now, here's the exciting part. Taking into consideration your lock's conditions as well as the context of the door (building, time of day, location, owner, etc.), you have to come up with a possible problem that could arise from the careless opening of the lock.
- Choose when will the repercussion/s affect the players. Will it be instant or something that will come into play later on?
- If instant, something unexpected is your best bet. Add a factor that the players didn't anticipate that demands immediate resolution. A good way to emphasize the urgency of the matter is to involve other people, given the nature of the situation, players either can't afford to be discovered or are looking for a non-violent approach to solve a problem, so they have to deal with whoever saw them.
- If it's something to be a problem later, it's best to dismiss the issue as if it wasn't much. These are often things that might seem minor at first but could have an important role. The idea of the lock breaking or leaving a mark are good examples of this, but they only work if the players actually care about that. If they don't mind that the owner of the house knows someone has been in there, then the mark does nothing for you. The key here is to understand what could be bothersome for your players and do something that subtly moves the game in that direction.

Didn't work? Have you tried smashing?

If your objective is to give your players as many options as possible while deciding how to enter somewhere, just remember that doors are breakable objects and that with enough time and the appropriate tools, you should be able to break most barriers. You just have to determine if the door in question is a breakable object, and how much time would it take for the players to destroy it. That's it really.

A few door examples

Here are some examples of doors for you to use in your games, with respective Problematic DC (PDC) and a Safe DC (SDC).

Remember that Automatic Success (AS) means that no matter how low you roll you'll open the door, and Automatic Failure (AF) means that you'll be unable to open the door unless you meet the Safe DC. In either case, there should be repercussions unless the term is used for the Safe DC.

Door's material

Determining what a door is made of won't usually affect the chance your players have of forcing the lock, but the difficulty of smashing it to pieces.

Regular doors

N°	Name	PDC	SDC
1	Archway	AS	AS
2	Dog door	2	7
3	Regular door	5	10
4	Reinforced Door	7	12
5	Barred door	9	14
6	Sealed door	11	16
7	Portcullis	13	18
8	Removable Wall	AF	20
9	Fake entrance	AF	AF

Hidden doors

N°	Name	Properties	PDC	SDC
1	Door beneath a rug	This door is hidden from view and requires a successful Investigation check to be found. You just have to move the rug honey.	AS	8
2	Door behind a bookshelf	This door is hidden from view and requires a successful Investigation check to be found. A specific book has to be pulled for the door to open.	5	13
3	Door behind a hearth	This door is hidden from view and requires a successful Investigation check to be found, and only if the fire is not currently burning	7	15
4	Door behind a mirror	This door is hidden from view and requires a successful Investigation check to be found. The door slides open if a secret button is pressed.	9	17
5	Door behind a wall	This door is hidden from view and requires a successful Investigation check to be found. The bricks have to be touched in a specific sequence.	13	22

Magical doors

N°	Name	Properties	PDC	SDC
1	Door of politeness	The door is locked and has an alarm. It can be opened and the alarm deactivated by knocking on its wood loudly three times.	11	15
2	Door of remembrance	This door is locked, and only opens if you passed through it before or came accompanied with someone that did.	14	18
3	Door of visual recognition	The door only opens if its eye sees the owner. Magic that alters appearance (such as Disguise Self) can trick the door into opening.	17	21
4	Door of stubbornness	Treat this door as a creature (use the Stone Golem statistics or a Golem of an appropriate material), it doesn't attack unless attacked or forced open.	20	24
5	Door of the bloodline	This door is locked and doesn't have a handle. To open it you need to smear on it blood from someone related to the owner.	AF	27
6	Door of moonlight	This door is locked and will only open when the light of the moon shines upon its encrusted gem. Moonbeam can trick the door into opening.	AF	30
7	Door of death	This door is locked and will only open if a creature is killed in front of it. Feign Death can trick the door into opening.	AF	AF

Puzzle doors

N°	Name	Riddle	Answer
1	Door of seasons	In summer I'm welcoming, in winter I'm not, yet I don't know from calendar or clock. It doesn't matter for I'm made of steel, and can always tell from the way I feel.	Use heat
2	Door of mice	Four dozen mice pass through me. First goes one, then two, then four, then eight, then sixteen. How many mice have to go next?	17 or The rest
3	Door of echoes	When I'm close, yet you can't reach, and you see me where I can't be. Only then, you shall open me.	Use a mirror

Door traits

I'll finish this up with possible characteristics you could attribute to the owner of a door based on the door's features, as well as a few examples of intentionality. All to help you come up with more appealing entrances.

Keep in mind that this is all meant as an assortment of examples to help you get going and, while you could easily use this in your games without a hitch, you should consider building your own traits and features depending on what your game needs.

Intentionality

N° Builder's intent

- 1 It was built to prevent people from going in.
- 2 It was built to prevent something from getting out.
- 3 It was built to conceal a great secret.
- 4 It was built to hide something of great value.
- 5 It was built as a way to escape should danger arise.
- 6 It was built to enter the building in secret
- 7 It was built as a decoy, to lure people in

What the door says about its owner

N° Old or damaged

- 1 The owner doesn't care about what happens to the building or maintaining it.
- 2 No one has lived in the building for a long time.
- 3 The inhabitants don't have enough coin to repair or maintain the building.
- 4 The building is meant to be considered as abandoned.

New or pristine

- 5 The building belongs to someone of wealth.
- 6 The owner cares a great deal about appearances.
- 7 The building has been recently constructed or renovated.
- 8 Those inside are trying not to arise suspicion.

Colorful or flamboyant

- 9 The owner wants everyone to know where he lives.
- 10 Someone painted the door as a joke.
- 11 The inhabitants are looking to attract people to their home.
- 12 No one would suspect that a cult to a dark god would hide behind a light salmon and dark lime colored door.

Ominous or intimidating

- 13 The owner doesn't like visitors.
- 14 The builder is trying to warn people to stay away.
- 15 It might be just a coincidence or an omen of things to come.
- 16 Now that's where a cult to a dark god should be hiding.

Mysterious or out of place

- 17 The owner is clearly not from here, he might not even be human (nor elf, dwarf, halfling, etc.).
- 18 The inhabitants have been to every corner of the world and back.
- 19 Someone well versed in magic must live here.
- 20 The building predates the town (or surrounding buildings).

Accessible or quite visible

- 21 The owner wants everyone to have easy access to the building.
- 22 The other buildings were built around this one.
- 23 The inhabitants are monitoring everyone that goes through.

Hidden or hard to find

- 24 The owner doesn't want to be found for some reason.
- 25 The inhabitants are doing something illegal or dangerous.
- 26 Some say that the easiest way of protecting people from something, is not telling them about it.

REMEMBER TO CLOSE THE DOOR ON YOUR WAY OUT

Hey there! You made it to the end, congratulations!

To be honest, this is my first time creating something like this, I usually go for smaller more proved-to-work kind of supplements, and I'm really hoping people are interested in this because I had a blast writing it.

If you did like it, please leave a comment, I'll read it. I promise. If you didn't, please tell me why! I'd love to get better.

Anyways, thanks a lot for giving me a chance, and I hope you keep reading my stuff!

Oh, and I'll be building a site soon™! Nothing fancy, just so people can more easily find more of my content. I'll leave it here, just in case.



<http://rpg.martindavico.com>

The art for this supplement was commissioned from Fran Bianchi, you can find more about his work here: [instagram.com/franbianchiart](https://www.instagram.com/franbianchiart).

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