

BATTLEFIELD

Russ Morrissey

EVENTS

Every fight is different, whether that be due to the participants, the weapons, the location, or even the weather. A sudden gust of wind or ground tremor, a wandering monster attracted by the commotion, or even a previously undiscovered trap - all these things can swing the tide of an encounter. Fate and fortune, after all, are as much part of battle as are skill and planning. This article introduces battlefield events - random events which can happen on the battlefield, affecting the combatants or the environment. Battlefield events add an additional element of randomness into a battle.

Using Battlefield Events

Battlefield events are easy to implement during a combat encounter. At the beginning of every round, simply roll 1d20. On a roll of 20, a battlefield event takes place. Roll 1d20 on the table on the next page to determine the event (or the GM may choose one).



Battlefield Events Chart (1d20)

1. Gust of Wind

A strong gust of wind suddenly blows across the battlefield. The force of the gust automatically extinguishes candles, torches, and similar unprotected flames. It causes protected flames, such as those of lanterns, to dance wildly and has a 50% chance to extinguish those lights. Ranged attack rolls and non-magical flight are not affected, because the gust is too brief. In addition to the effects noted, a gust of wind can do anything that a sudden blast of wind would be expected to do. It can create a stinging spray of sand or dust, fan a large fire, overturn delicate awnings or hangings, heel over a small boat, and blow gases or vapors to the edge of its range.

2. Visibility

An environmental effect limits visibility. The cause of this depends on the location — it may be the closing of a window or door, clouds obscuring moonlight, a sudden heavy fog or sandstorm, or the failure of magical lighting. Depending on the reason chosen, creatures with darkvision may still be able to see. Those who cannot see are considered blinded. The effect persists for one round.

3. Innocent

An innocent party unwittingly enters the battlefield. This could cause a hostage situation, or prompt good characters to protect the new arrival. The innocent will be vulnerable (low level, young, etc.).

4. Tremor

A minor earth tremor forces all combatants on the ground to make a DC 15 Dexterity save or fall prone.

5. Weather

It begins to rain or sleet heavily (depending on the environment). The weather lightly obscures vision, and all creatures on the battlefield suffer disadvantage on sight-based Wisdom (Perception) checks; if the weather is rain, this also applies to hearing-based checks. The weather extinguishes open flames. In the case of sleet, the ground becomes slippery for the rest of the encounter, requiring all creatures to succeed on a DC 10 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check to avoid falling prone the first time they attempt to move on it.

6. Monster

A random monster, attracted by the sounds of battle, enters the battlefield, attacking combatants at random. The monster(s) are selected by the GM and should be of a challenge rating equal to half the party's level.

7. Touch of Favor

Whether due to luck or to divine favor, one random combatant gains advantage on his next attack roll and automatically scores a critical hit if the attack roll is successful. Every combatant must roll 1d20, with the highest rolling combatant gaining this benefit. If there is a tie, all combatants in the tie gain the benefit.

8. Collapse

There is a major structural failure nearby. If outside, a 30-foot-tall tree falls in a random direction, affecting a 5-foot-wide, 30-foot-long area. If inside, the ceiling collapses at a random

location in a 15-foot-wide radius bury zone. Those under the falling items take 22 (4d10) bludgeoning damage (or half that with a DC 15 Dexterity save). The area underneath the collapsed section then becomes filled with rubble, and is treated as difficult terrain.

9. Pit

A 10-foot radius section of flooring or ground gives way. Those on the area may make a DC 15 Dexterity save to avoid falling in. Those who fall in take 4d6 bludgeoning damage (2d6 falling damage and 2d6 from debris), and are now prone in a 30-foot hole.

10. Press

The flow of combat shifts the entire battle in a random direction. Move all combatants 1d6x5 feet in a random direction. Nobody gains an opportunity attack. If a character's destination square, or one en-route, is blocked, he must make a DC 15 Dexterity save or fall prone.

11. Extreme Favor

For this round only, critical hits are scored on a natural die roll of 19 or 20, and rolls of 1 do not mean an automatic miss.

12. Vermin

The battle disturbs some small vermin living in the area. A swarm of insects, rats, or other appropriate vermin appears in a random location and begins to move randomly across the battlefield 1d6x5 feet in a random direction each round. Rats cause difficult terrain in a 10'x10' area; insects or bats cause disadvantage on ranged attacks and Wisdom (Perception) checks in the same area.

13. Dust Devil

A small whirlwind of dust moves across the battlefield randomly. A 10-foot × 10-foot area defines the dust cloud, and it moves 1d6x5 feet in a random direction each round. Those caught in the cloud must make a DC 12 Constitution save or be blinded for 1 round.

14. Arcane Flash

A burst of random residual spell energy, perhaps left by a long dead archmage or deity, causes magical powers to fluctuate. The next spell cast by any combatant on the battlefield automatically creates a Wild Magic Surge as per the sorcerous origin.

15. Trap

A random combatant sets off a hitherto undiscovered trap. All combatants roll 1d20; the highest rolling combatant sets the trap off. The GM selects a trap of **setback** severity from the core rulebooks.

16. Fumble

A random combatant fumbles. All combatants roll 1d20; the highest rolling combatant is the one who fumbles. If there is a tie, both combatants fumble. Roll 1d6 on the fumble table below. See the next page for fumble descriptions.

17. Fatigue

This battle is more grueling than most. All combatants must make a DC 15 Constitution save or gain one level of exhaustion until the end of the combat encounter.

Author - Russ Morrissey

Editor - James Haeck

Artist - Savage Mojo

18. I'm Getting Better

A combatant who has been downed is not as badly injured as it appeared at first. All downed (dead or dying) combatants roll 1d20. The highest rolling combatant recovers — it was only a flesh wound! He is prone, but actually has 50% of his normal hit point total. If there is a tie, all combatants in the tie recover in this manner.

19. Fatal Mistake

A random combatant makes a dangerous mistake and receives a critical hit from the nearest opponent able to do so (either ranged or melee). All combatants roll 1d20 — the highest rolling combatant is the one hit (both in a tie). The hit is automatic. If no combatant is in a position to hit the combatant in question, he fumbles instead (see #16, above).

20. A Really Bad Day

Roll twice on this table.



Fumble Descriptions

If a combatant suffers event #16 (Fumble), roll 1d6 to choose one of the following fumble events.

1. Prone. The combatant slips or trips and falls prone.

2. Disarmed. The combatant drops her weapon. If she is not holding a weapon, she drops any other item held in her hand(s). If she is not holding any items, she becomes entangled (see below) instead.

3. Entangled. The combatant gets caught up in foliage, furniture, curtains, or even his own backpack. He gains the restrained condition for one round.

4. Vulnerable. The combatant makes a tactical mistake and places herself in a vulnerable position. All attacks against her gain advantage until the beginning of her next round.

5. Disoriented. A random blow, or a moment of confusion, effectively stuns the combatant for one round.

6. Blinded. Whether from blood in his eyes, or a helm falling down over his face - perhaps even a bright light - the combatant is temporarily blinded for one round.