

Conversation Combat

Sometimes it feels like there's a disconnect between the mechanics of *Dungeons & Dragons* and the spirit of roleplaying. In one moment, the players are encouraged to engage with the world and characters on an intimate roleplaying level, but in combat, that sentiment is pushed aside in favour of rigid mechanical gameplay. This ruleset is an attempt to incorporate roleplaying and character conversation into combat by folding it into the mechanical framework.

Besides, players are always trying to talk enemies down in combat for some reason and it's getting weird. So:

New combat option

Make an appeal. As a bonus action, a player character can appeal to an enemy combatant on a personal level or distract them, draining their combat resources.

The target must be within 30ft, the target must understand the spoken language and the target must not be affected by the Deafened condition. The player rolls a Persuasion, Intimidation or Deception check. The type of ability check and DC is determined by the Dungeon Master.

On success, the target loses access to one of its combat resources as determined by the Dungeon Master. If an appeal fails by 10, the player character is so unconvincing, no further appeals will be heeded by the target for the rest of combat.

DETERMINING A DC

It can be difficult to determine a DC for bespoke situations like this — sometimes it's easy to fall into the trap of trying to account for too many factors. Instead, for the purposes of Conversation Combat, the DC should equal the target's Armour Class or the target's highest saving throw + 10, whichever is higher.

ADVANTAGE AND DISADVANTAGE

These rules are intended to be most effective when the player characters engage with target known to them, enhancing the drama of combat with old foes or troubled friends.

Disadvantage. The characters are strangers or know each other on a superficial level.

Regular roll. The characters are well known to each other and have had multiple conversations.

Advantage. The characters know each other on a deeply personal level.

COMBAT RESOURCES

Although the effect of a successful appeal is entirely up to the Dungeon Master, the combat resource being drained should be the same for the each appeal on the same target. Not every combat resource is available on every creature's statblock, so this is a list of possible benefits and a kind of priority order in which they could be applied.

- ✦ Target exhausts a Legendary Action
- ✦ Target exhausts its lowest level spell slot
- ✦ Target exhausts its lowest level class ability (eg. Second Wind, Bardic Inspiration)
- ✦ Target increases the difficulty of its Recharge ability by 1 until the end of its next turn (ie. if the ability is Recharge 5-6, it becomes Recharge 6)
- ✦ Target exhausts 5ft of movement until the end of its next turn
- ✦ Target exhausts its Reaction
- ✦ Target exhausts an attack (ie. when it uses the multiattack feature, it makes one less attack roll)
- ✦ Target rolls its next attack with disadvantage

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