

1. topic: Battlemaps

How to make a battlemap (in person)

- Drawing from hand (*Tip: grid paper with a plastic foil to draw upon and erase*)
- Software to use
 - [Inkarnate](#) (probably best known, easy, but with subscription)
 - [Dungeondraft](#) (more complicated but one time purchase)
 - [Dungeon alchemist](#) (steam) & [Arkenforge](#) for animated maps on screen with additional functions
 - Others: [Dungeonfog](#), [Map Forge](#), [Virtual Battlemap](#), [Dungeon Painter Studio](#)
 - For VTT: [Foundry](#)

Five things to include in your battlemap to make a fight interesting

- A lot of characters have special abilities that helps them navigate different terrain, climb on stuff, work with improvised weapons and so on. A well designed battlemap should let them use these features so not always the same players will shine. If somebody can move through difficult terrain they will be happy to use it!
- *Tip: Don't use all of these at once. They do play into each other though.*
- **Environment** – Depending on your campaign/setting
 - Do not use only open spaces. Switch it up with narrow and large fields, circles and rectangles
 - Switch it up: from plain to building, from mountain to jungle
 - Have obstacles – especially in the open spaces (trees, columns)
 - Give players and monsters different paths to take. Not only one hallway to the arena for example
- **Elevation**
 - Use high and low ground (not more than three levels, it gets confusing). For example, trees, buildings, dunes or cliffs
 - Give a boon or drawback for using the high ground (cover on high ground, skill check to get there, difficult terrain, easy to hide)
 - *Tip: Players or monsters may use it for traps*
- **Cover & Difficult Terrain**
 - As mentioned in elevation or environment: Add things to hide behind that give cover like boxes, tables, bushes
 - Difficult terrain is easy to include: Swamp, rubble, ice, water, ladders
 - *Tip: Difficult terrain is a great way to make you map "longer" than it actually is. Think about how much movement your players have and use it accordingly.*
- **Environmental hazards**
 - Static effects like pits, fire, cliff, water, poisonous stuff, traps. *Attention: If there are enemies that should not fall into a bottomless pit – don't include one.*
 - Dynamic effects that spread over the map: Fire spreading, water rising, smoke/poisonous cloud spreading
 - *Tip: If players entrenched themselves this can help flush them out. It also makes for interesting map design since new paths can be opened and others closed.*

- *Idea: Loot could be destroyed if players do not get there beforehand*
- **Interactable stuff**
 - Place things that can be found or interacted with like exploding barrels, carts to be pushed down, trees or rocks that can be fallen, potions in an alchemy shop, a chandelier to be cut down, obvious traps, ballista
 - This gives something to do for all characters and does feel great when it works out!
 - *Tip: Battle goal could be something they need to get/push/attack instead of killing all enemies.*
- **Additional tips to do and avoid**
 - Time restraints is a great way to intensify the battles
 - Creativity: Let players be creative when using your map and if they ask if they see XY why not let them find it
 - *Tip: create battlemaps together and let players decide where stuff is*
 - Think about enemy types and include different monsters
 - Additional rules
 - [Dynamic Combat Movement](#)
 - Spheres of [Power](#) and [Might](#)

2. topic: How to include/provoke roleplay

Especially with new groups or One-Shots it is sometime difficult to start roleplay so they get to know each other. Ideas how to deal with that:

- A minion from a player can be controlled by the DM so players have to react
- Inspiration for doing stuff against own interest or just for cool ideas especially with new players
- Grant advantage or disadvantage on checks when roleplaying (or metagaming)
- Let them meet a traveler on their journey («who are you» and other question)
- Ask an experienced player to start
- Give experience for roleplaying or let players divide it for themselves
- How to deal with players that go against the group – especially in One-Shots
 - Session zero
 - Just tell player to player
 - Give them the spotlight, can help sometimes

Varia

Systems to try out: Kids on brooms and kids on bikes, Amazing tales, Good society, Blades in the Dark, Cairn or Mansion of Madness, Bladerunnes

New topic Ideas for future talks: How to use light and darkness, History of DnD, How to integrate players backstories