A practical guide to playing legendary D&D adventures with just one character.
**LEGENDARY CHARACTERS**

From the depths of the crypt beside Mount Ennoc, a light emanates, a great wave of energy is expelled and nature is silent in the surroundings of the mountain before such power. A well-known figure emerges from the shadows, Drake, the legendary warrior carrying the Liberating Sword in one hand and the Lich's cadaverous skull in the other. Exhausted by the intense combat, the paladin takes just a few steps out of the crypt and gives in to fatigue, falling to his knees. His head rises to the rising sun that radiates in the firmament and despite the wear and pain in his body, his courage remains unshakable, as he has carried out his mission.

**EPIC OPENING**

The first expansion of rules for the *Solo Adventurer's Guide, Legendary Characters* provides guidelines for playing Solo D&D with just one character (instead of a party) and doing so without the need to make complex calculations for balancing of encounters.

Written for masterplayers, this supplement provides options to enhance campaigns in any world, whether you are adventuring in the Forgotten Realms or any other official setting of D&D, or in a world of your own creation. The options here are based on the mechanics contained in the Solo Adventurer's Guide; this expansion is, therefore, as its companion based on the same fundamentals, exploring the paths first outlined in the Guide. Nothing here is needed for a Solo D&D campaign - this is not a core rule book - but I hope it will provide you with new ways to enjoy your games.

**GO STRAIGHT TO THE SOURCE**

The *Solo Adventurer’s Guide* is a D20-based Dungeon Master emulation system that allows you to play D&D without the presence of a Dungeon Master. If you don’t know it yet, don’t waste any more time: [click here](#)

**CRUEL DOUBT**

A recurring question among Solo D&D players is whether it is possible to play an adventure or even a campaign with a single PC (Player Character) and the answer is yes, it is possible. However, as explained in the Solo Adventurer's Guide, the encounter tables and the level of challenge of the D&D creatures are usually designed for a group of four PCs, which makes it somewhat difficult to build balanced encounters and most of the time it ends with condemning the brave and lonely PC to a tragic and premature end.

One very simple solution presented in the Solo Adventurer Guide would be to start your adventure with a PC already in 4th level, in order to avoid a quick death just because you started at lower level. However, from experience, this solution is not satisfactory, because despite creating a sense of initial balance, it does not follow the character's progression throughout the adventure and will certainly not work when that character faces large groups of enemies or deadly traps.

Therefore, the purpose of this supplement is to go a little deeper into this issue and present a different, more elaborate and interesting solution that makes it possible to play planned adventures for four PCs with a single PC of the same level, without having to recalculate encounters, decrease the monsters' Challenge Rate (CR) or decrease the Difficulty Class (DC) of the tests that will be performed.

**THE BIRTH OF A LEGEND**

Creating a single character capable of facing the same challenges that a group of four adventurers would face is not such a simple task, as there are several factors that add up and complement each other to strengthen a group, such as movement in combat, short and long distance attacks, the use of brute force combined with magic and the ability to help, heal or even revive an ally.

Clearly we need to improve the power of this character in some way to a legendary level, providing you with new options in combat, more versatility, better reflexes and greater resistance. The challenge that we face then is how to measure this power and not leave this character either too weak or too strong. To find that balance point, I invite you to accompany me on a path in the next lines.
The Old and Long Road

First of all, I believe it is important to better understand how the balance of combat encounters works in the fifth edition and what criteria are used to determine whether a encounter is balanced or not. There are two main parameters that must be observed when building balanced encounters: the XP Thresholds by Character Level and the Challenge Rate (CR) of monsters. Let's take a look at how these two parameters work in practice:

### XP Thresholds by Character Level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Character Level</th>
<th>Easy</th>
<th>Medium</th>
<th>Hard</th>
<th>Deadly</th>
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The Dungeon Master's Guide on page 82 presents four categories of difficulty for a combat encounter as can be seen in the table above, which was extracted from a larger table in the book. Normally when you want to create a balanced encounter, you should use XP values that are between the two central categories of the table, that is, between the Medium and Hard categories. These XP values in the table refer to the XP threshold for only one PC, so to know the party's XP threshold, you must add up the individual characters' XP thresholds.

Let's look at a practical example: a group of four 3rd level characters would have the following XP limits:

- **Easy**: 300 XP ($75 + 75 + 75 + 75$)
- **Medium**: 600 XP ($150 + 150 + 150 + 150$)
- **Hard**: 900 XP ($225 + 225 + 225 + 225$)
- **Deadly**: 1200 XP ($400 + 400 + 400 + 400$)

We will prepare an encounter with Orcs based on these calculated values, to serve as an example. Every monster has an XP value in its stats block in the Monster Manual based on its CR. An Orc has a CR = 1/2 which equals 100 XP. We could then think of an encounter with 6 to 9 orcs to be between the Medium and Hard categories, right? Wrong. If the encounter includes more than one monster, it is necessary to apply a multiplier to the monsters' total XP. The logic behind this multiplier is that a group of creatures attacks more often in the same round and offers more difficulty than the simple sum of their challenge rates. Let's look at this multiplier table then:

### Encounter Multipliers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Monsters</th>
<th>Multiplier</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>3-6</td>
<td>x 2</td>
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<tr>
<td>7-10</td>
<td>x 2.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>11-14</td>
<td>x 3</td>
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<tr>
<td>15 ou +</td>
<td>x 4</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Applying the multiplier according to the table above for an encounter with 6 Orcs (x2), a total of 1200 XP is reached, which would classify this encounter in the Deadly category. It would then be necessary to reduce the number of Orcs to 3 or 4 so that the total XP corrected by the multiplier was between Medium and Hard, respectively between 600 and 800 XP. However, we are still thinking about an encounter for a group of four 3rd level PCs and not considering the numerical disadvantage if that group were reduced to a single PC. Note how the power of a group of four creatures is valued whose XP total is multiplied by two in the multiplier table.

The Dungeon Master's Guide also presents an interesting solution to this problem of numerical disadvantage on page 83, suggesting that the multiplier immediately below the table be applied if the number of PCs is less than three. That is, if instead of four PCs there were only one or two, that same encounter with 3 or 4 Orcs would now have the total XP multiplied by the value immediately higher in the table (x2.5) and would result in 750 and 1200 XP respectively. And again it would be necessary to reduce the number of Orcs, now to 1 or 2, in order to have a balanced encounter, classified between the categories of Medium and Hard difficulty.

From this small exercise that we did for a simple encounter with Orcs, we can already see that the idea of recalculating encounters using the above parameters is laborious and often ends up limiting the possibilities, reducing the number of opponents or forcing us to replace the creature with another with a lower CR, and this is not the path we are looking for here, we need another way out...
**Breaking new ground**

I invite you to accompany me in a slightly different way of thinking than we have seen so far: let's think about how balancing works when it is the monsters that are outnumbered, when a group of four characters meets a single monster.

The Xanathar's Guide to Everything on page 88 presents innovative guidelines for building encounters and explains that if the fight is against a single opponent, your best candidate to be the enemy of the PCs is a *Legendary Creature*, as that type of creature was designed exactly to meet that need. The book features a table indicating the CR of the most suitable legendary monster according to party size. Below is a small part of that table.

### Solo Monster Challenge Rating

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Character Level</th>
<th>6 Characters</th>
<th>5 Characters</th>
<th>4 Characters</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Using the same example that we saw earlier, a group of four 3rd-level PCs could have a "satisfying but difficult" combat encounter with a legendary CR = 3 creature. Of course, this is just a hypothetical example, because in the Monster Manual there are no legendary creatures below 5th level. But it is interesting to note that the column of "4 Characters" provides for encounters with legendary creatures with CRs practically equal to the level of the PCs. And this is amazing, as it is exactly what we are looking for here, an equivalence of the 1:4 ratio. Let’s investigate what this type of creature has that makes it capable of facing multiple opponents.

**Legendary Creature**

A legendary creature can do things that ordinary creatures can’t. It can take special actions outside its turn, and it might exert magical influence for miles around. (*Monster Manual, p. 11*)

Doing a quick analysis we will notice that legendary creatures have three mechanics that differentiate them from other monsters. They are the Legendary Actions, the Legendary Resistance and the Lair Actions. The latter, although very interesting, does not interest us in the construction of the legendary character, so let’s leave it aside and focus on the first two. Legendary Actions allow the creature to take certain actions outside its turn, and Legendary Resistance is the ability to choose to succeed on a saving throw in which they have failed.

This is the way to transform our character into a true legend, making them capable of matching a party of four PCs of the same level. Let’s see below how to adapt these mechanics for our *Legendary Character*.

**The Legendary Character**

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**Legendary Actions**

As already mentioned, legendary actions are a type of special action that a legendary creature can perform outside its turn.

Normally, a legendary creature has up to three of these actions per round and can use only one at a time, at the end of another creature’s turn, choosing one of the options from a short list. At the start of its turn, the creature recovers all of its spent legendary actions. The creature is not required to use legendary actions and it cannot use legendary actions while being disabled.

For our Legendary Character, legendary actions will work the same way. Starting from 1st Level, they will have 3 Legendary Actions available per round, which will allow them to act up to four times in a round. Here are the options that will be available and below a small example of how this would work in practice:

- **Attack** You perform a weapon attack or an unarmed attack. The bonuses and characteristics that would normally apply to this type of attack also apply here such as the rogue’s Sneak Attack ability, if not already used in that round, or the paladin’s Divine Smite. This legendary action option does not give you the right to use the Extra Attack ability nor a bonus action to attack with another weapon that is held in the offhand.

- **Cast a spell (Costs 2 Actions)** You cast one of your known and prepared spells in her lower circle, using a magic slot equal to or greater than its circle. This legendary action option can be used even if you have already cast a spell on your turn. You can use this legendary action to cast a spell that has the casting time of a bonus action, but not one that has the casting time of a reaction. Concentration rules and component requirements (V, S and M) apply normally for spells cast using this legendary action option.

- **Move** If you haven’t used all of your speed in this round yet, you can choose to use what’s left of it as a legendary action. The rules of movement, difficult terrain, flight and opportunity attack apply normally. If during your turn you used the Run action and at the end of it did not spend all the allowed speed, you can use a legendary action to continue your movement up to the maximum allowed.

- **Detect** You make a Wisdom (Perception) check. You can use this legendary action even if you have already made this type of test this round.

- **Hide** You perform the Hide action. You can use this legendary action even if you have already taken the Hide action in that round and regardless of whether you have succeeded or failed a Dexterity (Stealth) check made previously.

- **Interaction with an object** You can interact with one object or feature of The Environment, as long as this interaction lasts for the maximum duration of an action (approximately 6 seconds). Examples: pulling a lever, drawing a sword, drinking a potion, putting on a shield, picking up an object from the ground or dropping something in your hand.

- **Cantrip** You cast one of your known cantrips.
**Legendary Actions: Example**

Before we look at the example, it is worth remembering the following: Only one legendary action can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature’s turn. All legendary actions spent are recovered at the beginning of the legendary character’s turn.

Akmenos, the legendary character in this example meets 3 Orcs... Initiative!

- Orc 1 took 22 on the initiative order, he shoots a javelin while approaching Akmenos.
- Akmenos is hit by the javelin and uses one of its three Legendary Actions to move around and seek cover behind a tree.
- Orc 2 took 20 on the initiative order, it also advances and throws a javelin!
- Akmenos uses his second Legendary Action to strike back and cast the Firebolt cantrip! Now he has only one Legendary Action left.
- Orc 3 took 19 on the initiative order, it runs to Akmenos, now entering its melee range.
- Akmenos uses his third Legendary Action and attacks Orc 3 with his staff.
- Akmenos scored 18 on the initiative order. Now that his turn has arrived he recovers the three Legendary Actions he spent and can perform his action normally. Akmenos conjures up the Shocking Grasp cantrip and moves away from the Orc without causing Opportunity Attack (due to the effect of this cantrip)

Back to the beginning of the initiative order, Orc 1 strikes again with the javelin and gets closer.

- Akmenos casts the Arcane Armor spell on himself and spends two Legendary Actions for that. Now you only have one Legendary Action left.
- Orc 2 strikes again with its javelin and advances towards Akmenos.
- Akmenos uses his third and final Legendary Action (since the previous one cost two) to cast the cantrip Firebolt. Now Akmenos is without legendary actions.
- Orc 3 approaches again and attacks with his battleaxe.
- Akmenos has already spent all of his legendary actions, so he must wait his turn to recover them.
- Akmenos’ turn comes again and he recovers all of his 3 Legendary Actions. After that he can act normally on his turn...

**Important Considerations**

Here are some important considerations for using Legendary Actions:

- Legendary Actions can already be used in the first round even before your first turn, as shown in the example. However, if your character is surprised they will not be able to move or perform an action on their first turn and will not be able to have a Reaction or use their Legendary Actions until their first turn ends.

- If there is an encounter with less than three creatures, the Legendary Character may not be able to spend all of its Legendary Actions, since only one legendary action can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature’s turn.

- Legendary Actions do not cancel actions readied during the character’s turn and it is also worth remembering that they happen only at the end of another creature’s turn and should not be confused with Reactions, such as the Opportunity Attack, which interrupts another creature’s ongoing turn.

- Some powerful combinations are made possible with Legendary Actions like using your turn to Dodge and the three Legendary Actions to Attack; or use your turn to Disengage and a Legendary Action to Hide; or even use the three Legendary Actions to create different simultaneous effects in cantrips like Prestidigitation, Minor Illusion, Druidcraft or Thaumaturgy.

**Legendary Resistance**

As already mentioned, Legendary Resistance is the ability to choose to succeed in a saving throw that you have failed. Usually legendary creatures can use this ability three times a day and for our Legendary Character it will work very similarly, regaining this ability with Long Rest.

It may seem that this ability is very strong, but it is actually necessary if we want to equate our Legendary Character to a group of 4 PCs. Think about how unfair it would be if our character faced an Beholder alone... practically any saving throw against the eye rays in which the character failed would be their end! Another terrible situation would be when a very weak creature managed to enchant them. When playing in a group, allies can continue fighting even if an ally is petrified, paralyzed, restrained, enchanted, blind or suffering from any other condition that for a character alone would mean death.

Therefore, in order for it to produce the expected effect, this ability must be reserved for moments that really offer mortal danger to the character, situations in which the failure of a saving throw can end the adventure.
**Hit Points and Hit Dice**

To complete the construction of the Legendary Character, it is also necessary to reinforce their hit points. Since we want them to face the same challenge levels as a group of 4 PCs, it is necessary to make the following change to the hit points and hit dice rule:

**Hit Dice:** 4 hit dice per class level

**Hit Points at 1st level:** (maximum value of your hit die) x 4 + your Constitution modifier x 4

**Hit Points at Higher Levels:** 4 hit dice (or mean value x 4) + your Constitution modifier x 4 per class level after 1st.

**Example: Hit Points and Hit Dice**

A warlock with Constitution 14 will already start at 1st level with 40 HP (8 x 4 + 2 x 4) and 4 hit dice (4d8). At higher levels he must add 4d8 (or 5x4) + 2x4 to his total HP and will receive 4 hit dice per class level.

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**Reminder about long rest**

It is worth remembering that taking a long rest a character recovers a number of spent Hit Dice equal to half of his total Hit Dice, that is, a legendary character in the first level will recover 2 hit dice; on the 2nd Level, 4 hit dice; and so on.

If you’ve read this far, then you've seen all the mechanics for creating Legendary Characters in Solo D&D. The next few pages will only help you to improve the experience of playing alone. Now it is time to put into practice what you have already learned; play a little, just to practice and absorb the mechanics presented, and after that, the following chapters will make a lot more sense.


Advice of the Wise Elder

The young Geruh came marching in front of the cave of the elder wizard. He rocked his hips showing the short sword that was attached to his belt. The blade was clean and very sharp, the result of the hours the boy spent sharpening it on the wheel with perfectionism. A leather helmet fell on his nose and he could no longer hide his smile of excitement. Master! - He shouted and puffed his chest doing a hero pose. The old man leaves the cave leaning on the walls and stretches lazily... then he fluffs the earth with his oak staff and smiles at the boy. Are you ready? - Asked the sage, already knowing what the answer would be. Yes, master! - The boy sings, failing in an attempt to thicken his voice. They leave. The boy's thin, short legs seem to want to run forward. Some steps forward and his restlessness takes on a voice: Master, where's your sword? The elder wizard smiles: My sword is my mind.

Own your game

If you already have some experience in Solo RPGs, you will probably have already discovered some "shortcuts": alternative mechanics or house rules that help you save your time by avoiding dice rolls, repetitive calculations or unnecessary queries to the rules book. With practice and familiarity in the system, it is common and even desirable for players to create their own rules if this makes their game easier and increases their fun.

For this game model with only one PC this is no different. You will notice that some mechanics in D&D can be simplified, altered or even discarded without any harm to your experience in the game, but on the contrary, it can help you focus more on other aspects of RPG that really matter to increase immersion.

This chapter contains some ideas and suggestions for alternative rules for Solo D&D with a legendary character. Feel free to test these mechanics however you want and share your experiences with the community, after all we can all learn from each other. I hope these ideas will somehow help you to increase your fun in the game.

Initiative!

The first mechanic that can be easily modified is the Initiative Order. Knowing that your legendary character will be able to act up to three times outside their turn and even before they have played the first turn, there will be less harm in letting some opposing creatures precede them in the order of initiative. Here are three suggestions that can help speed up your game:

- Rolling only one die for a group of opponents. When facing a group of creatures, even if they differ from each other, you don't need to roll for initiative for all of them, but simply group them and choose only the creature with the highest Dexterity modifier to make the roll. If the opponents' roll value is less than that of your character, they will take the first turn and otherwise, the last. The order between the opposing creatures need not follow any logic, as long as they all have only one turn in the round. So if the bugbear acts before or after their tamed wolf, it is something that you can decide to change each round.

- Use only dexterity modifiers. You can avoid rolling the dice and just use dexterity modifiers to determine the initiative order. If there is more than one creature with the same value in the modifier, you can choose at random who will act first each round. If there is a tie between one or more creatures and your legendary character, you can just roll their initiative to break the tie.

Example: Legendary Character (+3) > 2x Goblins (+2) > 1x Hobgoblin (+1).

- Use the Dexterity attribute value. Similar to the previous suggestion, however instead of using the values of the modifiers, the value of the Dexterity attribute is used. The interesting thing about this method is that the odd numerals are already the first tiebreaker criterion.

Example: Legendary Character (16) > 2x Wolf (15) > 3x Goblins (14).

Dog Day

The Dungeon Master's Guide on page 84 explains that, assuming typical conditions of adventure and average luck, most groups of adventurers can handle in one day approximately six to eight encounters in the categories of medium or hard difficulty. Under the premise that the legendary character will face the same challenges as a typical group of adventurers, we can assume this same pace for their adventure days and, just thinking about it, we realize how great their achievements will be.

For the legendary character to really be able to handle everything that is expected, you must use their full potential and you will certainly need to allow them to take more short rests throughout the day to spend their hit dice and recover hit points over each battle. However, allowing an hour's rest at the end of each battle will decrease the level of realism in your game and may break the pace of the adventure. A good solution for this is to allow short rests of shorter duration, from 15 minutes to half an hour.
With the necessary rests and the new rule presented in this guide for Hit Points and Hit Dice, which practically multiplies them by four, the saving of hit points between long rests is well resolved, however the recovery of spell slots and other features and traits can still be a problem if your character faces a day full of traps, ambushes and crowned with a boss. Of course, this can easily be circumvented by giving your characters magic items, blessings and consumable items like potions or scrolls, but we can also think of something in terms of mechanics.

Also on page 84, the Dungeon Master’s Guide presents a table to estimate how much XP a character is expected to receive per day, according to their level (see the table below). These values provide a good estimate of how many encounters and traps a character is capable of handling before they need to take a long rest. To solve the problem with the economy of spell slots, features and traits, just allow your legendary character to recover them each time you reach that XP limit in a single day. Here are three ideas for how to do this:

- **Allow a short rest to have some long rest effects.** In this case, the character could recover all uses of spell slots, features and traits in a short rest as if they have taken a long rest (but they would not recover Hit Points or Hit Dice). If you have adopted the suggestion of short rests with reduced time, here you can make an exception and let the character really spend an hour hydrating, meditating, praying, studying or simply taking care of their injuries.

- **Allow two long rests to occur within an interval of less than 24 hours.** This suggestion simply allows your character to take more than one long rest per day, that is, they can stop at any time of the day to rest and fully recover as long as they have already reached the minimum XP that day. And at the end of the day, the character can repeat that long rest if they want to. In order not to reduce the level of realism and the pace of the adventure, you can interpret that in these daytime long rests your character is doing light activities and not necessarily sleeping (or in a trance, if the are elf) or you can also adopt the idea of the next topic specifically for those rests.

- **Allow long rests to be reduced to an hour or two.** This alternative rule will significantly increase the pace of your adventure and can be especially interesting if your character is a night hunter, or if you are exploring a dungeon or wild environment during the night, when you would normally need to be resting. Another interesting factor of this alternative rule is that hardly any rest of this duration can be interrupted by a random encounter.

- The three previous ideas, if adopted, will significantly increase the number of spells a character can cast each day. If you decide to use one or more of these rules, but want to lessen the effects of recovering spell slots, consider limiting these daytime rests for spellcasters to only recovering half their maximum spell slots (rounded down) and the restored spell slots to the 5th circle or lower. Only a full 8-hour long rest will allow a caster to recover all spell slots, including those of the 6th circle or higher.

### Healing Surges

If your legendary character has no healing magic, consider using this alternative rule contained in the Dungeon Master’s Guide (p. 266): As an action, a character can use a healing surge and spend up to half his or her Hit Dice. For each Hit Die spent in this way, the player rolls the die and adds the character’s Constitution modifier. The character regains hit points equal to the total. The player can decide to spend an additional Hit Die after each roll.

A character who uses a healing surge can’t do so again until he or she finishes a short or long rest. Under this optional rule, a character regains all spent Hit Dice at the end of a long rest. With a short rest, a character regains Hit Dice equal to his or her level divided by four (minimum of one die).

<table>
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SOLO ADVENTURER'S GUIDE

LEGENDARY CHARACTERS

RULES SUMMARY

Hit Dice: 4 hit dice per class level

Hit Points at 1st level: (maximum value of your hit die) x 4 + your Constitution modifier x 4

Hit Points at Higher Levels: 4 hit dice (or mean value x 4) + your Constitution modifier x 4 per class level after 1st.

Legendary Resistance (3/Long Rest). If you fail a saving throw, you can choose to succeed instead.

Legendary Actions. You can perform 3 legendary actions, chosen from the options below. Only one legendary action can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. You recover all the legendary actions spent at the beginning of your turn.

- **Attack**: You perform a weapon attack or an unarmed attack.
- **Cast a spell (Costs 2 Actions)**: You cast one of your known and prepared spells on its lower circle, using a spell slot equal to or greater than its circle.
- **Move**: If you haven't used all of your speed in this round yet, you can choose to use what's left of it as a legendary action.
- **Detect**: You perform a Wisdom (Perception) check.
- **Hide**: You take the Hide action.
- **Object interaction**: You can interact with an object, as long as that interaction lasts for the maximum duration of an action.
- **Cantrip**: You cast a cantrip.

ALTERNATIVE RULES

Subtitle

SR = Short Rest
LR = Long Rest
HD = Hit Dice

Initiative

Creature group initiative
The order of enemy turns may vary with each round
Replace rolls with Dexterity attribute value/mod.
Roll the dice only in case of a tie with the PC

Reduced rest time

SR - 15min to 30min
LR - 1h to 2h

Recovery of spell slots and abilities

Each time you reach the "XP per day" level, the PC gains one of the characteristics below and the counting starts again. At the end of the day, counting also resumes.

- The PC can take a SR and recover spell slots and abilities as if it were a LR
- The PC can perform a LR even if their last LR was less than 24 hours ago

<table>
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Limitation for the recovery of spell slots

SR (or LR with reduced duration)
Recovers 1/2 of your max. up to 5th circle

LR (8h)
Recovers all spell slots spent from all circles

Healing Surges (For PC without healing magic)
With 1 Action you can spend up to half of the total HD
SR - recovers Lever/4 HD (rounded down, min. 1)
LR - recovers all HD
SOLO ADVENTURER'S GUIDE

LEGENDARY CHARACTERS

A practical guide to playing legendary D&D adventures with just one character.

by Guilherme Bento

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