

Dungeon Master[®]
4th Edition
FOR
DUMMIES[®]

by James Wyatt, Bill Slavicsek, and Richard Baker

Foreword by Jeff Grub



WILEY

Wiley Publishing, Inc.

Dungeon Master[®]
4th Edition
FOR
DUMMIES[®]

by James Wyatt, Bill Slavicsek, and Richard Baker

Foreword by Jeff Grub



WILEY

Wiley Publishing, Inc.

Dungeon Master® 4th Edition For Dummies®

Published by
Wiley Publishing, Inc.
111 River Street
Hoboken, NJ 07030-5774
www.wiley.com

Copyright © 2009 by Wiley Publishing, Inc., Indianapolis, Indiana

Published by Wiley Publishing, Inc., Indianapolis, Indiana

Published simultaneously in Canada

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, scanning or otherwise, except as permitted under Sections 107 or 108 of the 1976 United States Copyright Act, without either the prior written permission of the Publisher, or authorization through payment of the appropriate per-copy fee to the Copyright Clearance Center, 222 Rosewood Drive, Danvers, MA 01923, (978) 750-8400, fax (978) 646-8600. Requests to the Publisher for permission should be addressed to the Legal Department, Wiley Publishing, Inc., 10475 Crosspoint Blvd., Indianapolis, IN 46256, (317) 572-3447, fax (317) 572-4355, or online at <http://www.wiley.com/go/permissions>.

Trademarks: Wiley, the Wiley Publishing logo, For Dummies, the Dummies Man logo, A Reference for the Rest of Us!, The Dummies Way, Dummies Daily, The Fun and Easy Way, Dummies.com, Making Everything Easier, and related trade dress are trademarks or registered trademarks of John Wiley & Sons, Inc. and/or its affiliates in the United States and other countries, and may not be used without written permission. Dungeon Master is a registered trademark of Wizards of the Coast, Inc. All other trademarks are the property of their respective owners. Wiley Publishing, Inc., is not associated with any product or vendor mentioned in this book.

LIMIT OF LIABILITY/DISCLAIMER OF WARRANTY: THE PUBLISHER AND THE AUTHOR MAKE NO REPRESENTATIONS OR WARRANTIES WITH RESPECT TO THE ACCURACY OR COMPLETENESS OF THE CONTENTS OF THIS WORK AND SPECIFICALLY DISCLAIM ALL WARRANTIES, INCLUDING WITHOUT LIMITATION WARRANTIES OF FITNESS FOR A PARTICULAR PURPOSE. NO WARRANTY MAY BE CREATED OR EXTENDED BY SALES OR PROMOTIONAL MATERIALS. THE ADVICE AND STRATEGIES CONTAINED HEREIN MAY NOT BE SUITABLE FOR EVERY SITUATION. THIS WORK IS SOLD WITH THE UNDERSTANDING THAT THE PUBLISHER IS NOT ENGAGED IN RENDERING LEGAL, ACCOUNTING, OR OTHER PROFESSIONAL SERVICES. IF PROFESSIONAL ASSISTANCE IS REQUIRED, THE SERVICES OF A COMPETENT PROFESSIONAL PERSON SHOULD BE SOUGHT. NEITHER THE PUBLISHER NOR THE AUTHOR SHALL BE LIABLE FOR DAMAGES ARISING HEREFROM. THE FACT THAT AN ORGANIZATION OR WEBSITE IS REFERRED TO IN THIS WORK AS A CITATION AND/OR A POTENTIAL SOURCE OF FURTHER INFORMATION DOES NOT MEAN THAT THE AUTHOR OR THE PUBLISHER ENDORSES THE INFORMATION THE ORGANIZATION OR WEBSITE MAY PROVIDE OR RECOMMENDATIONS IT MAY MAKE. FURTHER, READERS SHOULD BE AWARE THAT INTERNET WEBSITES LISTED IN THIS WORK MAY HAVE CHANGED OR DISAPPEARED BETWEEN WHEN THIS WORK WAS WRITTEN AND WHEN IT IS READ. FULFILLMENT OF EACH COUPON OFFER IS THE SOLE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE OFFEROR.

For general information on our other products and services, please contact our Customer Care Department within the U.S. at 800-762-2974, outside the U.S. at 317-572-3993, or fax 317-572-4002.

For technical support, please visit www.wiley.com/techsupport.

Wiley also publishes its books in a variety of electronic formats. Some content that appears in print may not be available in electronic books.

Library of Congress Control Number: 2008937852

ISBN: 978-0-470-29291-4

Manufactured in the United States of America

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1



About the Authors

Bill Slavicsek began playing the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS roleplaying game with his friends during his formative teenage years in New York City. This was in 1977, the same year that *Star Wars* and Terry Brooks's *The Sword of Shannara* debuted. This trilogy of epic fantasy combined with comic books and horror novels to forever influence Bill's outlook on life and entertainment. In 1986, Bill's hobby became his career when he joined the staff of West End Games. There, as an editor and game designer, Bill worked on a number of board games and roleplaying games, including *Ghostbusters*, *Paranoia*, *Star Wars: The Roleplaying Game*, and *Torg: Roleplaying the Possibility Wars*. Later, Bill went on to use his vast knowledge of the *Star Wars* films and associated extensions to write two editions of *A Guide to the Star Wars Universe* for Lucasfilm, Ltd. (published by Del Rey Books).

In 1993, Bill joined the staff of TSR, Inc., then publishers of the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS game lines, as a game designer and editor. His design credits for the company include the *Alternity Science Fiction Game* (which he co-designed with Richard Baker), the *d20 Modern Roleplaying Game*, the *d20 Star Wars Roleplaying Game*, the *Star Wars Miniatures Game*, *Urban Arcana*, *Council of Wyrms*, and the *EBERRON Campaign Setting*.

Since 1997, Bill has been the R&D Director for Roleplaying Games, Book Publishing, and D&D Games for Wizards of the Coast, Inc., the company that now publishes all DUNGEONS & DRAGONS novels and game products. He oversaw the creation of the d20 Roleplaying Game System and the latest editions of the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS game. Bill leads a talented staff of game designers, developers, and editors who produce award-winning game products for DUNGEONS & DRAGONS and other d20 System game lines, including roleplaying game supplements and accessories, adventures and campaign books, and pre-painted plastic miniatures. He lives with his wife Michele, their cat Pooh, and more comics, toys, and books than he knows what to do with — and that's okay by him.

Richard Baker is an award-winning game designer and a best-selling author. He's worked on the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS game lines since 1991. Rich traces his D&D experience back to 1979, when he began playing the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS game as a 7th-grader. He spent a significant amount of his high school and college years playing D&D at every opportunity, and after serving as a surface warfare officer in the United States Navy, Rich decided to take a shot at working on the game he grew up playing — and so he joined the staff of TSR, Inc., and became a game designer.

Rich's list of D&D design credits numbers over 60 game products, including the Origins Award-winning *Birthright Campaign Setting*, the *Alternity Science Fiction Roleplaying Game* (which he co-designed with Bill Slavicsek), and the 3rd Edition DUNGEONS & DRAGONS game. He has also served as creative director for the Alternity and FORGOTTEN REALMS game lines. As an author, Rich has published ten fantasy and science fiction novels, including *Swordmage*, the *Last Mythal* trilogy, and the New York Times bestseller *Condemnation*.

Rich is currently employed as a senior game designer at Wizards of the Coast, Inc., and works every day on new products for the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS game. He married his college sweetheart Kim in 1991; they have two daughters, Alex and Hannah. When he's not writing (a rare occurrence), Rich likes to hike in the Cascades, play wargames, and root for the Philadelphia Phillies — because somebody has to.

James Wyatt is a game designer and sometime novelist who joined the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS design staff in 2000. He credits *The Lord of the Rings* and D&D with starting him on a winding life path that has taken him through a college degree in religion and a Master of Divinity degree, on through a short stint as an ordained minister in two United Methodist churches in Ohio, and still onward past some time as a technical writer before finally landing at Wizards of the Coast.

James won Origins Awards for his work on the FORGOTTEN REALMS adventure *City of the Spider Queen* and the EBERRON *Campaign Setting*, and he was the main designer for the award-winning *Oriental Adventures* sourcebook. He spent three years on various teams as one of the lead designers for the fourth edition of the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS game and compiled wisdom from the greatest minds in gaming for the fourth edition *Dungeon Master's Guide*. He's also the author of three fantasy novels set in EBERRON.

James is now the Lead Story Designer for DUNGEONS & DRAGONS, which means he leads a team of writers and creative geniuses to shape the story and worlds of the D&D game, as well as writing the polished prose of background and flavorful material for the D&D rulebooks. His wife, Amy, is an artist, actor, home-school teacher, minister, and spiritual director as well as a great sounding board for his novel and game ideas. James and Amy have one son, Carter, who wants his father's job.

Dedication

Bill Slavicsek: To DMs everywhere, past, current, and future. The world needs you, now more than ever. Dream it up, play it, and have fun!

Richard Baker: To Kim, Alex, and Hannah for putting up with a lot of work in evenings and on weekends for many months now. “Understanding” is an understatement.

James Wyatt: To Carter, whose boundless creativity is constantly inspiring, even (or especially) when I can’t keep up.

Author’s Acknowledgments

Bill Slavicsek: The newest edition of the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS game owes its existence to a lot of talented people. The work that James, Rich, and I have done on this *For Dummies* book would not have been possible if not for the original effort of a formidable team of creatives and business people. Thank you to my creative team on the massive redesign project, which included Rob Heinsoo, Andy Collins, James Wyatt, Mike Mearls, Chris Perkins, Kim Mohan, Michele Carter, and Jeremy Crawford. Also thank you to the brand team, who help bring D&D products to market, which includes Liz Schuh, Scott Rouse, Kieren Chase, Sarah Girard, Linae Foster, and Martin Durham.

I have to also acknowledge the efforts of the rest of my game design staff. This amazing collection of designers, developers, and editors work every day to push the envelope and expand the horizons of our products, and as much as I lead them, they influence the way I think about and approach game design and D&D. Every part of this *For Dummies* book owes at least a little to the ideas and work of Richard Baker, Greg Bilsland, Logan Bonner, Bart Carroll, Bruce Cordell, Peter Lee, Stephen Radney-MacFarland, Julia Martin, David Noonan, Peter Schaefer, Stephen Schubert, Chris Sims, Rodney Thompson, Rob Watkins, Jennifer Clarke Wilkes, Steve Winter, and Chris Youngs.

Finally, thanks to everyone at Wiley Publishing who worked with us on this book, including Amy Fandrei, Jean Nelson, and Virginia Sanders, and to everyone at Wizards of the Coast, Inc., who help us make great games and other great products on a regular basis.

Richard Baker: Many people of exceptional creativity have worked on the D&D game over the years. Without the work of game designers, editors, and artists such as Gary Gygax, Dave Arneson, Jim Ward, Kim Mohan, Zeb Cook, Jeff Grubb, Steve Winter, Bruce Nesmith, Tim Brown, Troy Denning, Roger Moore, Ed Greenwood, Mike Carr, Harold Johnson, Andrea Hayday, Jon Pickens, Lawrence Schick, Skip Williams, Dave Sutherland, Jeff Easley, Larry Elmore, and countless others, D&D would not have grown into the beloved hobby of millions of fans across the world. Countless other authors, artists, developers, and editors have contributed over the years; we're sorry that we can't thank them all.

A special acknowledgment is in order for Peter Atkinson, Ryan Dancey, and other folks who were instrumental in bringing the D&D game and many of its designers to Wizards of the Coast, Inc. Through their efforts, they reinvented and reinvigorated the game at a difficult and crucial time in its life cycle.

I'd like to add a special thank you to good friends and colleagues who have shared in my own D&D games over the years, including Ed Stark, John Rateliff, David Eckelberry, Shaun and Miranda Horner, David Wise, Thomas Reid, David Noonan, James Wyatt, Warren Wyman, Duane Maxwell, Andy Weedon, and Dale Donovan. I've had a lot of fun saving the world with you guys!

James Wyatt: It has been a privilege and an honor to work with so many people of such tremendous genius and creativity on such an exciting project as the D&D game. I wouldn't have this job and be where I am today if it weren't for a few key people: Bill Connors, Dave Gross, Bill Slavicsek, and Rich Baker. Even more, I wouldn't know a thing about being a Dungeon Master if it weren't for the great authors of *Dungeon Masters Guides* past, those who came before and on whose shoulders I was lucky enough to stand: Gary Gygax, Zeb Cook, and Monte Cook. Then there's the DMs I've been lucky enough to play with at various times over the past eight years: Dave Noonan, Ed Stark, Rich Baker, Warren Wyman, Andy Collins, and Bill Slavicsek.

I also want to thank the Imperium Romanum crowd, my gaming group "back home": Paul Gries, David Silbey, Mark Lawrence, David Lieb, David Wallenstein, Matt Lewkowicz, Doug Leonhardt, and several others who passed through from time to time. Thanks for everything, folks.

Publisher's Acknowledgments

We're proud of this book; please send us your comments through our online registration form located at www.dummies.com/register/.

Some of the people who helped bring this book to market include the following:

Acquisitions, Editorial, and Media Development

Project Editor: Jean Nelson

Acquisitions Editor: Amy Fandrei

Copy Editor: Virginia Sanders

Technical Editor: Christopher Perkins

Editorial Manager: Kevin Kirschner

Media Development Project Manager:
Laura Moss-Hollister

Media Development Assistant Project Manager: Jenny Swisher

Media Development Assistant Producers:
Angela Denny, Josh Frank, Shawn Patrick,
and Kit Malone

Editorial Assistant: Amanda Foxwoth

Sr. Editorial Assistant: Cherie Case

Cartoons: Rich Tennant
(www.the5thwave.com)

Composition Services

Project Coordinator: Erin Smith

Layout and Graphics: Claudia Bell, Carl Byers,
Rueben W. Davis

Proofreaders: John Greenough, Betty Kish

Indexer: Steve Rath

Art Credits: William O'Connor, Jim Nelson,
Anne Stokes, Steve Prescott, David Griffith,
Ron Spencer, Carl Frank, Jeffrey Carlisle,
Michael Dubisch, Lucio Parillo,
Eva Widermann, Dan Scott, Jason Engle,
Lee Moyer

Publishing and Editorial for Technology Dummies

Richard Swadley, Vice President and Executive Group Publisher

Andy Cummings, Vice President and Publisher

Mary Bednarek, Executive Acquisitions Director

Mary C. Corder, Editorial Director

Publishing for Consumer Dummies

Diane Graves Steele, Vice President and Publisher

Composition Services

Gerry Fahey, Vice President of Production Services

Debbie Stailey, Director of Composition Services

Contents at a Glance

<i>Foreword</i>	<i>xix</i>
<i>Introduction</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Part I: Running a Great Game</i>	<i>9</i>
Chapter 1: The Role of the Dungeon Master.....	11
Chapter 2: Preparing for Play.....	21
Chapter 3: Running the Game	31
Chapter 4: Narrating the Adventure	45
Chapter 5: Dealing with Players	59
Chapter 6: Teaching the Game.....	71
Chapter 7: Your First Adventure: Kobold Hall.....	83
<i>Part II: Advanced Dungeon Mastering</i>	<i>101</i>
Chapter 8: Running an Ongoing Game.....	103
Chapter 9: Choosing Your Game Style	117
Chapter 10: Creating Excitement at the Game Table	127
Chapter 11: Growing Your Game	143
Chapter 12: Using Every Available Resource	151
<i>Part III: Creating Adventures</i>	<i>165</i>
Chapter 13: Tools of the Trade	167
Chapter 14: The Dungeon Adventure	183
Chapter 15: The Wilderness Adventure.....	191
Chapter 16: The Event-Based Adventure	197
Chapter 17: The Randomly Generated Adventure	203
Chapter 18: Paragon and Epic Adventures	215
Chapter 19: Sample Dungeon: The Necromancer's Apprentice	221
<i>Part IV: Building a Campaign</i>	<i>253</i>
Chapter 20: Building a Continuous Story	255
Chapter 21: Creating Memorable Villains.....	267
Chapter 22: Bringing the World to Life	275

<i>Part V: The Part of Tens</i>	283
Chapter 23: Ten Heroic Encounters	285
Chapter 24: Ten Paragon Encounters	319
Chapter 25: Ten Things to Avoid When DMing.....	359
Chapter 26: Ten Things to Do All the Time When DMing.....	365
<i>Index</i>	369

Table of Contents

Foreword.....*xix*

Introduction **1**

About This Book.....1
About This Revision.....2
Why You Need This Book.....2
How to Use This Book3
D&D Terminology.....4
How This Book Is Organized.....6
 Part I: Running a Great Game.....6
 Part II: Advanced Dungeon Mastering6
 Part III: Creating Adventures6
 Part IV: Building a Campaign6
 Part V: The Part of Tens.....7
 Bonus chapters and full-color pages7
Icons Used in This Book.....7
Where to Go from Here.....8

Part I: Running a Great Game **9**

Chapter 1: The Role of the Dungeon Master **11**

What Is a DM?12
So You Want to Be the Dungeon Master?12
What Do You Need for Playing?.....13
The Expressions of Dungeon Mastering.....14
 DM as rules moderator15
 DM as narrator.....16
 DM as a cast of thousands16
 DM as player17
 DM as social director18
 DM as creator.....19
The Goal of Dungeon Mastering.....20

Chapter 2: Preparing for Play **21**

Gathering a Game Group.....21
 Finding players22
 Inviting players to the game24
Using a Published Adventure26
 Wizards of the Coast products26
 Dungeon magazine26

RPGA	27
Other d20 publishers	27
Creating Your Own Adventures	27
Making Preparations before the Game	28
Establishing the Ground Rules: Gaming Etiquette	29
Chapter 3: Running the Game	31
Taking Charge as Dungeon Master and Running the Game	31
DM laws	32
DM basics	33
Narrating.....	33
Running NPCs and monsters	34
Winging it.....	34
Playing through the Game Session	34
Setting ground rules.....	35
Settling in as everyone arrives	35
Gathering around the game table.....	35
Updating characters	36
Opening with the prologue.....	38
Recapping the previous session.....	39
Taking on encounters	40
Handling combat	41
Ending a game session.....	44
Closing with an epilogue	44
Chapter 4: Narrating the Adventure	45
Understanding D&D as a Storytelling Experience	45
The group story concept.....	45
An ongoing epic	46
The DM's role	47
Telling Interesting and Exciting Stories.....	47
Making a story a D&D story	48
Choosing an adventure premise.....	49
Mastering the Adventure Narration.....	50
Directing the adventure.....	50
Adding special effects.....	51
Playing the nonplayer characters	53
Bringing the Adventure to Life	55
Creating fantastic locations	55
Describing intense battles.....	56
Giving the players exciting challenges	57
Roleplaying in encounters.....	58
Chapter 5: Dealing with Players	59
D&D: A Social Experience.....	59
Looking at the Game Group	60
Comparing DMs and Players	60
Being the DM.....	61
Interacting with players.....	61

What do you want out of the game?	63
Increasing the fun quotient	64
Setting Ground Rules and Expectations	64
Choosing a theme and style	65
Adding new players	66
Bringing books	66
Managing off-topic discussions	67
Considering computers	67
Sharing DM Duties	69
Guest DMs	69
Shared-world campaign	69
Multiple campaigns	70
Chapter 6: Teaching the Game	71
Dungeon Master as Teacher	72
Teaching the basic rules	73
Showing how to create a character	73
Relaxing and having fun playing the game	74
Making Use of Helpful Aids	74
D&D Roleplaying Game Starter Set	74
Dungeons & Dragons 4th Edition For Dummies	74
Keep on the Shadowfell	75
Dungeons & Dragons Miniatures	75
Teaching Key Elements to New Players	75
Explaining the premise of D&D	75
Describing the world of D&D	77
Showing how to use the core mechanic	77
Explaining what a character can do	78
Explaining character role	79
Explaining the most important parts of the character sheet	79
Making the Transition from the 3rd Edition to the 4th	81
Chapter 7: Your First Adventure: Kobold Hall	83
Getting Started with the Adventure	83
Knowing the players	83
Knowing your adventure	84
Understanding the adventure format	85
Making Changes to the Adventure	85
Making encounters easier or harder	86
Appealing to player motivations	88
Transforming the kobolds	89
Expanding the adventure	90
Running the Adventure	91
Grounding the characters	92
Hooking the characters	92
Getting to the action	93
Area 1: Sludge Pit	94
Area 2: The Tomb	95
Area 3: Skull-Skull!	97

Area 4: The Big Boss	98
Area 5: The True Threat	98
Doling out the treasure from Kobold Hall	99

Part II: Advanced Dungeon Mastering..... 101

Chapter 8: Running an Ongoing Game103

Choosing the Right Format	104
The standalone session	104
The dungeon-of-the-week adventure	105
The one-shot campaign	106
The continuing campaign	107
Building a Basic Campaign.....	108
Creating the home base.....	108
Linking adventures together	110
Outlining a campaign arc.....	112
Using the Sample Base: Fallcrest.....	113
Story elements and your campaign	114
Adventures in and near Fallcrest	115

Chapter 9: Choosing Your Game Style117

Analyzing the Players	117
Balancing Play Styles.....	119
DM Styles: Running the Game You Run Best	120
Action movie director.....	120
Storyteller.....	121
Worldbuilder	121
Puzzlemaker	122
Connector	122
Establishing Your Own Style.....	123
Setting the Tone	124
Autocrat or facilitator?	124
Arbiter or narrator?	124
On-task or player-paced?.....	125
Preparation or improvisation?.....	126

Chapter 10: Creating Excitement at the Game Table127

Maximizing Imagination	127
Narrating for all five senses	128
Mixing the mundane and fantastic.....	128
Suspending disbelief	130
Setting the mood	131
Showing, not telling.....	132
Pacing the Game.....	135
Cliffhangers	135
The cut-away scene.....	135
Getting to the fun fast	136

Keeping the Game Moving	137
What does the monster do?	137
Can I try this?	139
Should the DM cheat?	141
Chapter 11: Growing Your Game	143
Setting Your Game in a World	143
Adding New Rules Elements	144
Monsters and magic items	145
Rituals and magic items	146
Powers and feats	146
Character classes and races	147
Paths and destinies	147
Getting Players Involved in the Game	148
Crafting good backgrounds	148
Using character goals	149
Chapter 12: Using Every Available Resource	151
Buying Published Game Material	151
Understanding what's out there	152
Figuring out what you need	155
Using D&D Insider	157
The D&D magazines	157
D&D Compendium	158
The D&D Game Table	158
The D&D Dungeon Builder	158
Using the Rest of the Internet	159
Finding Story Inspiration	160
The real world	160
Fantasy fiction	161
Movies and TV	161
The collision of ideas	162
Talking with Other Gamers	163
Joining a game club	163
Corresponding on the Web	163
 Part III: Creating Adventures	 165
Chapter 13: Tools of the Trade	167
Breaking Down the Parts of a D&D Adventure	167
The premise	168
Encounters	170
The end	172
Creating Dungeon Maps	172
Building Encounters	173
Encounter level	174
Monster roles	175

Terrain, hazards, and challenges.....	177
Encounter scripts.....	179
Rewards.....	181
Experience points.....	181
Treasure.....	182
Chapter 14: The Dungeon Adventure	183
Designing Your First Dungeon.....	184
Plotting the dungeon’s story.....	184
Drawing the map	185
Marking the encounter areas.....	186
Making a key	187
Adding Depth to Dungeon Crawls.....	189
Chapter 15: The Wilderness Adventure	191
Designing a Wilderness Adventure.....	191
What is the wilderness?.....	192
How to use the wilderness	194
Wilderness Adventure Outline	196
Chapter 16: The Event-Based Adventure	197
Designing Event-Based Adventures.....	197
The flowchart.....	198
The timeline	200
Using Flowcharts and Timelines in Dungeons	201
Chapter 17: The Randomly Generated Adventure	203
Using the Random Dungeon Tables.....	203
Getting started.....	204
Using D&D Dungeon Tiles to lay out a random dungeon.....	205
Random Encounters	207
Using a Random Encounter Deck.....	209
Special cards.....	209
Sample encounter deck	211
Generating Random Treasure.....	213
Chapter 18: Paragon and Epic Adventures	215
Understanding the Paragon Tier.....	215
Understanding the Epic Tier.....	216
Understanding Specific Challenges for	
DMing High-Level Characters	217
High mobility.....	218
Divination and scrying.....	218
Making the Experience Match the Level	219
Raising the stakes.....	219
Wowing the players with the setting.....	219
Providing benchmark encounters.....	220

Chapter 19: Sample Dungeon: The Necromancer's Apprentice . . . 221

Dungeon Master Preparation.....	221
The Necromancer's Apprentice	222
Adventure premise.....	222
Starting the adventure.....	223
Arim's pasture.....	225
The Cloak Wood.....	227
House of Roburn.....	229
The dungeon below.....	236
Concluding the adventure.....	249
Adapting the Adventure	249
Adjusting for group size and level.....	250
Adjusting for player motivations.....	250
Adding encounters and treasure.....	252

Part IV: Building a Campaign 253**Chapter 20: Building a Continuous Story 255**

Building a Campaign	256
Creating a world	256
Using context	256
Building on past events	257
Finding inspiration	258
Choosing themes for adventures and campaigns	259
The Dungeon-of-the-Week Campaign Model	262
Building on What the Players Give You.....	263
Converting an Old Campaign to the 4th Edition	263
Glossing over the transition.....	264
Blowing up the world.....	265
Starting fresh.....	266

Chapter 21: Creating Memorable Villains 267

What Is a Villain?	267
Every Hero Needs a Good Villain	269
Good villains take work	269
Give villains every chance to succeed	270
Villain Archetypes	271
Master villains.....	271
Minor villains	273

Chapter 22: Bringing the World to Life 275

The World in a Nutshell: The DM's Notebook	275
Building a World from the Inside Out: Start Small and Add Details	276

Putting the World Together	277
Climate and geography	278
Sites of interest	280

***Part V: The Part of Tens*283**

Chapter 23: Ten Heroic Encounters285

Goblin Lair.....	285
Elf Raiders	288
Hobgoblin Guards	292
Fiery Doom.....	295
Orc Reavers.....	298
Gnoll Marauders.....	302
Forest Hunters	305
Stalking Shadows.....	308
Big Trouble.....	311
Swamp Terrors	314

Chapter 24: Ten Paragon Encounters319

Serpent Cult	319
Rocky Road	323
Githyanki Raiders.....	326
Zehir's Army	330
Feydark Terror.....	334
Drow Scourge.....	338
Diabolic Legion.....	342
Forge Defenders	346
Death's Chill.....	351
Winter Hunt.....	354

Chapter 25: Ten Things to Avoid When DMing359

Don't Get Attached to Your Villains	359
Don't Try to Kill the PCs.....	359
Don't Let the Players Become Too Frustrated	360
Don't Compete with Other Entertainment.....	361
Don't Overcomplicate the Encounter	361
Don't Play Favorites	361
Don't Give the Players Everything . . .	362
. . . But Don't Be Stingy, Either	362
Don't Sit There Like a Lump	363
Don't Center the Game on One Player.....	363

Chapter 26: Ten Things to Do All the Time When DMing365

- Be Prepared365
- Provide Various Challenges365
- Start Each Session with Action.....366
- Look for Opportunities.....366
- Exude Drama in Your Descriptions.....367
- Use Visual Aids367
- Be Responsive367
- Be Consistent.....367
- Be Impartial.....368
- Have Fun.....368

***Index*.....369**

Foreword

It is time to step up your game.

DUNGEONS & DRAGONS has been reinvented with its 4th Edition. A lot of sacred cows have met their maker, a plethora of mechanics have been rethought and overhauled, a host of basic tenets questioned and made anew. Traditional classes have been reforged with an eye towards playability and old monsters have returned with a nod to ease of use. Yet the core of D&D remains, the part of that is absolutely necessary for the game to be. The art that is the heart of the game.

The fine art of Dungeon Mastering.

Being a DM is a quantum leap up from merely playing the game. You aren't keeping track of a single character but rather coordinating a full-fledged world. You're not worrying just about what is behind the next door but about how the epic adventure will ultimately resolve. You have to be ready for anything that a group of creative, inventive, and downright devious players will throw at you over the course of a game session. You are host, team leader, narrator, head bad guy, playwright, supporting cast, ringleader, and ringmaster, all at the same time.

It is a very tall order. Fortunately, Bill, Rich, and James put it all together in one package for you.

I can vouch for Bill's DM credentials. For many years now, a group of us creative types, present and former members of Wizards of the Coast, have gathered at his house every Thursday night for our weekly game. Bill has used us as a test-bed for new projects he has worked on, including the Star Wars RPG, d20 Modern, EBERRON, the new arrangement of the Planes, and now 4th Edition. Yes, we get to play the first drafts (and take the initial lumps) of the new systems. It's a tough job, and Bill makes it a heckuva lot of fun.

Rich is no slouch in the DM department either, as an author and game designer with world-building credentials from way back, and has spent a small eternity managing Wizard of the Coast's sprawling, chaotic, eternal campaign, the FORGOTTEN REALMS. Oh, and in one of his first projects, for a D&D-in-space campaign called Spelljammer, he put battleship guns on an asteroid and took it out for a spin. So he thinks outside the box as well as any devious player.

And James Wyatt brings it all together and up to date as the lead designer on the new *Dungeon Master's Guide* for 4th Edition. This one volume is the summation of over 25 years of D&D history, explaining not only the what and how of running a campaign, but the why as well. James produced the most readable and well-reasoned version of this classic and necessary book, and now helps distill it into this format.

Dungeons & Dragons 4th Edition For Dummies gives you a box of tools. *Dungeon Master 4th Edition For Dummies* shows you what you can build with those tools. *Dungeons & Dragons 4th Edition For Dummies* gives you a rainbow of paints. *Dungeon Master 4th Edition For Dummies* shows you what you can portray with those paints. *Dungeons & Dragons 4th Edition For Dummies* opens the door to a new universe. *Dungeon Master 4th Edition For Dummies* goes through that door, and shows you how to create your own worlds and delight and entertain your players.

There is a whole new universe out there — it's time to go play.

Enjoy.

Jeff Grubb

Co-founder of the Dragonlance campaign setting and co-creator of the FORGOTTEN REALMS campaign setting, Jeff is the author of over a dozen novels, thirty short stories, and more game products than is either polite or proper to mention. When he's not building worlds for computer game companies, he's making up Chuck Norris jokes about the 4E fighter exploits. Some of his characters in Bill's Thursday Night Games have been Moondog Greenberg the kabalistic biker, Whappamanga the Wookiee, Captain Keldon of the interplanar ship *Dragon Roar*, and Emm the Inappropriately Exuberant warlord.

Introduction

The DUNGEONS & DRAGONS roleplaying game has been exciting and expanding the imaginations of players around the world for more than 30 years. The key components to a good (or better yet, *great*) game of D&D include enthusiastic players; a fun adventure; and a good (or better yet, *great*) Dungeon Master. The Dungeon Master (also known as the DM) applies imagination, game rules, and creative flair to make every game session fun and memorable for the entire game group. Indeed, DMs firmly believe that the role they take on in the D&D game provides the most rewarding, creative, and fun experience available.

It's good to be the DM!

We've carefully crafted this book to make the role of Dungeon Master more accessible to D&D players. Not everyone has the temperament and mindset — or the desire — to be the DM for a gaming group. But if the idea of creating scenarios or even entire worlds of adventure for your friends appeals to you, you owe it to yourself to explore the role of the DM.

And, if you're already DMing for your gaming group, the hints and tips layered throughout this book will help you become a better DM . . . perhaps even a *great* DM. Goodness knows that the D&D game — and the world, really — needs more great DMs.

About This Book

We wrote this book because the nice folks at Wiley Publishing, Inc., liked our previous *For Dummies* books and they asked us to update this book for the 4th Edition of the D&D game. But we also wrote it because we have a passion for the D&D game, and we want to share that love with as many people as possible. We wrote in our previous *For Dummies* books that the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS game speaks to and feeds the human condition. As a game of the imagination, D&D builds on the myths and fantasies that shape our culture. In an age when so many activities involve isolated people, D&D is a social experience. Nothing else — no computer game, no board game, no movie — comes close to delivering the interactive and unlimited adventure of the D&D experience.

It's the Dungeon Master who makes much of that creative, social, and interactive experience possible. Simply put, you can't play the D&D roleplaying game without a Dungeon Master. The DM is essential, and a good DM is worth his or her weight in gold pieces!

Even if you've run a hundred games, this book provides the advice you need to expand your gaming techniques. Experienced Dungeon Masters will find hints, tips, and advice designed to elevate your game to new levels: From improving your game sessions to creating adventures and crafting campaigns, we cover it all. If you've never run a game as the DM, this book is a great place to start. We explain the ins and outs of Dungeon Mastering and offer plenty of advice on how to become the best DM you can be.

About This Revision

This book is a complete revision of the original *Dungeon Master For Dummies*, updated to make use of the 4th Edition D&D rules. It doesn't just update the rules material, though. It's revised to speak to new assumptions about the role of the Dungeon Master and the way he or she interacts with the other players. Frankly, it's also rewritten to remove what would otherwise have been a duplication of what's already in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*. The original *Dungeon Master For Dummies* did such a good job of explaining how to be a Dungeon Master that the 4th Edition *Dungeon Master's Guide* learned from its example and included a lot of the same kinds of advice!

As an example of what we mean, take a look at Chapter 7 in this book. In the original book, that chapter was a simple sample dungeon. Now the *Dungeon Master's Guide* (DMG) gives you a sample dungeon, so here in this book we help you make the best use of the sample dungeon in the DMG instead. Similarly, Chapter 8 discusses how to make the best use of Fallcrest, the sample "home base" in the DMG, rather than creating a new base town for you to use.

Why You Need This Book

New Dungeon Masters need this book because it's written by D&D experts to serve as a comprehensive guide for DMing. Even though the D&D *Dungeon Master's Guide* is a great resource, it glosses over topics we cover here in much more detail. This book offers more examples, including a complete adventure to complement the short dungeon in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*.

It's written as a training manual in a straightforward, direct manner (the *For Dummies* style).

With this book, you discover facts about running the D&D game that many seasoned DMs have never realized. Do you know how to build balanced encounters to best challenge your party? Do you know the tricks to keeping a game session moving? Do you know how to wing it when your players try something really unexpected? How do you make a ruling when they try something that goes beyond the boundaries of the game? Thanks to our years of experience and our unprecedented access to the Wizards of the Coast's Research and Development department, we've filled this book with insider knowledge and examples that can't help but make you the best DM you can be.

Seasoned Dungeon Masters can always be made better, and we try to share our knowledge and experience in every chapter of this book. The D&D game is as unlimited as the imaginations of its players, and something fresh and new is always waiting to be discovered. We shine a light in all the myriad corners of the game to help you find details you never knew were there, or at least remind you of something you haven't used in a while. We want to make you a better DM because better DMs make for better games.

How to Use This Book

You can use this book in many ways. You can read it cover to cover, in chapter order, and follow along with our loose narrative that explains the concepts of Dungeon Mastering from the basics to the most advanced applications of the role. Alternatively, you can glance at the Table of Contents or index and jump around to the chapters, sections, or pages that most interest you. That works fine, too.

If you're new to the idea of being the Dungeon Master, we suggest starting with Part I. It helps explain the DM's role more fully and provides the foundation for the chapters and parts that follow. If you've run a few game sessions, explore the information in Part I to see whether you're fully utilizing the tricks and tools available to you. Then move on to Part II to take your DM style to the next level. If you're an old pro, jump to whatever section of the book strikes your interest. Even in chapters that seem below your level of experience, we bet you can find something new and fresh to try at the gaming table. And we're sure that everyone will find something exciting and fun in the Part of Tens.

This book assumes you have at least some experience with the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS game. If this isn't the case, we suggest you start with this book's

companion volume, *Dungeons & Dragons 4th Edition For Dummies*. You might also want to buy the *DUNGEONS & DRAGONS Roleplaying Game Starter Set* from Wizards of the Coast.

We wrote this book assuming that, as a somewhat experienced D&D player or DM, you have the core D&D game books — *Player's Handbook*, *Dungeon Master's Guide*, and *Monster Manual*. We refer to these volumes often throughout these pages. This book isn't a replacement for any of your D&D game books; it's a companion piece designed to make the information in those volumes clearer and easier to understand, while adding new information specifically designed to make you a better Dungeon Master.



This book's Cheat Sheet is a handy DM screen you can use to conceal your notes (and perhaps your die rolls) from your players. On the side that faces you, it also presents some of the most common things you need to look up during a game, such as the definitions of conditions, target DCs and damage numbers for when you're improvising, and common attack and defense modifiers.

D&D Terminology

The DUNGEONS & DRAGONS game, like other intensive activities, has a lot of jargon that can sometimes make comprehension a bit tricky. We wrote this book using as much plain language as possible, but you're still going to need to know some of the terms that long-time players take for granted.

Here's a quick recap of a few common terms that we use over and over:

- ✔ **DUNGEONS & DRAGONS:** The original roleplaying game of medieval fantasy and adventure. In the game, players take on the role of imaginary characters defined by a series of statistics, cool powers, and magical abilities. The game is played around a table or other comfortable location where players can spread out books and papers and roll dice. D&D (the short form of the name) is a game of the imagination, part group storytelling game and part wargame. There are no winners or losers in this game; the point is to build an exciting fantasy story through the actions of the characters and the challenges set forth by the Dungeon Master.
- ✔ **Dungeon Master:** One player is the Dungeon Master (the DM). Other players control single characters, while the DM controls all the monsters and enemies, narrates the action, referees the game, sets up the adventures, and develops the campaign. Every D&D game needs a DM.

- ✔ **Player character:** The character controlled by a player is called a player character (PC). A player character might be a powerful fighter, a sneaky rogue, a crafty wizard, or a charismatic cleric, for example.
- ✔ **Nonplayer character:** A character controlled by the Dungeon Master is called a nonplayer character (NPC). An NPC might be a friend, a hireling, a merchant, or a villain, for example, that the player characters interact with in some way.
- ✔ **Adventure:** The player characters are adventurers in a fantastic world of magic and monsters. Multiple PCs (controlled by players) join together to form an adventuring party to explore dungeons and battle amazing creatures such as dragons and trolls. Each mission (or episode of the story) is called an adventure. An adventure might last for a single session of play or stretch over the course of several game sessions.
- ✔ **Campaign:** The D&D game doesn't have to end with a single adventure. When the same characters continue from one adventure to another in an ongoing storyline, the overall story is called a campaign.
- ✔ **Dice:** The D&D game uses dice to resolve actions and determine other factors where the outcome isn't certain. The twenty-sided die is the most important, as all major actions in the game are resolved using it. The game also uses a four-sided die, a six-sided die, an eight-sided die, a ten-sided die, and a twelve-sided die. You often see abbreviations used for dice where *d* is followed by the number of sides for that particular die, such as d20, d4, d6, d8, d10, and d12. Sometimes you need to roll multiple dice of a specific shape, such as three ten-sided dice, which is abbreviated as 3d10. Sometimes you need to roll multiple dice and add a modifier, such as two four-sided dice plus two, which is abbreviated as 2d4 + 2.
- ✔ **Player's Handbook:** The first of the three books that make up the rules of the D&D game. This volume contains the basic rules of play and character creation. No D&D player should be caught without one.
- ✔ **Dungeon Master's Guide:** The second of the three books that make up the rules of the D&D game. This volume contains the information the Dungeon Master needs to run the game, set up adventures, build campaigns, and award treasure and experience to the player characters.
- ✔ **Monster Manual:** The third of the three books that make up the rules of the D&D game. This volume is packed with monsters to challenge even the toughest D&D heroes and contains information that every DM needs to know.

How This Book Is Organized

Dungeon Master 4th Edition For Dummies consists of five parts. The chapters within each part cover specific topics in detail. In each chapter, we start with the basics of the topic and build from there. Whenever a point needs further clarification, we reference the appropriate chapter so you can immediately find any additional information you need. Whenever it comes up, we also refer you to the appropriate place in one of the core D&D game books, or even in *Dungeons & Dragons 4th Edition For Dummies* if we think something in that book will help.

Part I: Running a Great Game

Dungeon Master, meet your game. Game, meet your Dungeon Master. The chapters in this part assume you're a new to moderately experienced DM and provide all kinds of tips and methods for running and improving your D&D game.

Part II: Advanced Dungeon Mastering

The chapters in this part are designed to take your Dungeon Mastering skills to the next level, with advanced discussion topics, techniques, and options. Even experienced DMs can find something new and exciting in this part.

Part III: Creating Adventures

Ultimately, every DM wants to try his or her hand at creating an original adventure. In this part, we provide advice and guidance on how to craft memorable adventures, and we wrap up this part with a sample dungeon that shows the techniques in action.

Part IV: Building a Campaign

This part explores methods for stringing individual adventures together to create an ongoing campaign. Discussing themes, villains, and plots, we get to the heart of what turns a series of adventures into a memorable and exciting campaign.

Part V: The Part of Tens

No *For Dummies* book is complete without this section of top-ten lists. We take this concept to a new level by presenting encounters, maps, and traps that you can use in your own D&D games.

Bonus chapters and full-color pages

You can find three bonus chapters on the Dummies.com Web site at www.dummies.com/go/dungeonmaster4e. The first two bonus chapters give ten major and ten minor quests you can use as the basis for an adventure or for side stories. The third bonus chapter provides ten epic-level encounters, complete with maps, monsters, and traps.

We also included eight full-color pages filled with fantastic artwork in the middle of this book. We hope the artwork will give you inspiration for your next adventure!

Icons Used in This Book

To guide you along the way and to point out information you really need to know, this book uses the following icons:



This icon points to tips and tricks that simplify or speed up some aspect of DMing the D&D game.



Remember these important nuggets and you'll be a better DM.



If you see this icon, read and follow the accompanying directions. This information can prevent you from having a bad game session.



Whenever you see this icon, you know we're directing you to more detailed information in one of the D&D core rulebooks — the *Player's Handbook*, *Dungeon Master's Guide*, or *Monster Manual*.

Where to Go from Here

We recommend starting with Part I, but feel free to turn to whatever chapters interest you. Just remember to have fun! Approach this book in the spirit of the D&D game, trust us and the wisdom we try to impart, and you'll be well on your way to becoming a DM or to improving the DMing skills you already possess. (Be sure to check out the bonus chapters at www.dummies.com/go/dungeonmaster4e.)