

# Types of Encounters & Scenes

**Preface.** Encounters, Scenes, and Sequence may all flow in & out of each other. Or be blended together. Mechanic are not explained below just the definition or how I view the encounter/scene

**Encounters** = Encounters are events that take place where the characters don't really need warning. They can happen randomly. May still drive a story but could be completely discounted from the story.

**Scenes** = Scenes are events that solely evolve around telling a story. They may require little to no rolling. They often times require a conversation with the player and require the player to be on board. Typically a player or players may be given the spotlight.

**Spotlight** = Light or No rolls to be had. A chance for the player to direct the story as they see fit. Heavy roleplay. (The player may become the GM basically for a short period of time.)

**Sequences** = Sequences are a subset of an encounter or scene and may be uniquely run or involve any number of smaller scenes or encounters of any type. The encounter or scene may fly back and forth between different sequences

## Combat Encounters

### War Encounter

The War Encounter is a way to simulate a massive war with several small battles across a large span of time and space.

#### Cinematic Sequence

These are sequences where other kinds of encounters/scenes can take place for the players during the massive war. Encounters/Scenes that will influence the war on a larger scale. Helping to nudge the overall Wargame to the player's favor.

#### Wargame Sequence

Wargame sequence is like a massive game of risk for the players. It is a way for the players to have some control over the large-scale movement and actions of armies they are not directly involved with. A way of factors outside of the player's control to be determined. Wargame attempts to represent and determine the outcome of many battles in a large amount of space and time. The player decisions have major impacts in these many battles but they can **not** be there directly for all of them or have the reach to control everything.

## **Capture Scene**

These are scenes where the players are captured by an opposing force. I have found this scene “or encounter type” is best done if the player is on board. Is told ahead of time that they will have a chance to escape. I have seen this type of scene often done as player introductions in a new campaign or super early on in the story. But using great roleplay this can be done at any time. I have also found their needs to be a need for this type of scene in the story. Either to deliver information or to deliver a story.

## **Gloating Scene**

The is a typical trope where the villain rambles on about their master plan and should be done to deliver intel and/or interesting lore to the players.

## **Struggle Sequence**

This is a sequence where the players using purely roleplay say what they are doing while the villain has them captive. They may explain how they are “trying” to escape. Or how they are “preparing” to “die”. It should try to add lore, background, flavor, and/or personality to the character and/or story.

## **Stealth Sequence**

Similar to the struggle sequence this is what the player will do to eventually escape or what another player is doing to rescue. This could be a player secretly cutting their bonds, a player praying or begging to some god or ancient power, or maybe another player sneaking around the enemy camp trying to find the player in need.

Mechanics often for me include a number of rounds, minutes, or a set destination / object that needs to be reached before the player frees themselves

## **Villain Sequence**

This is the villain talking. Giving their speech. Walking back and forth.

## **Conquer Sequence**

The conquer sequence is when the player overpowers the villain by escaping in whatever way they roleplayed during the stealth sequence. This could turn into a combat encounter but I prefer to oftentimes make this a spotlight moment. So the player just tells me and roleplays what they want to happen within reason.

## **Prison Scene**

This is a scene where the players are in a prison or tied up. The escape will happen at some point but that may not be clear right now. Currently they are talking to NPC prisoners or awaiting their fate till they find out what to do next.

## **NPCs Interrogating Encounter**

This is an encounter type listed further down that will have more detail included then. But it is a social encounter where the opposing NPC will try to torture or question the PC to get

information out of them. It is highly roleplayed but there are mechanics for tracking the PCs will power and energy.

I think it is important for the PCs to know that even though the NPC is interrogating them they can oftentimes get more information out of the encounter through their questions or silence (roleplay).

### **Transport Scene**

This is a capture scene that is designed to physically move the location of the players for story reason most likely. Follows the same concepts as the gloating scene and some of the prison scene but is **not** necessarily focused around just directly delivering intel.

### **Struggle/Stealth Sequence**

Again similar to as stated above. This is what the player may be doing to try to escape. But because this is often times a transition scene the escape may not actually occur yet.

### **Villain Sequence**

Again what the bad guys are doing. But in this case there may not be much here. And could be as simple as they are driving the caravan or the PCs are alone in the hull of a ship.

### **Travel Sequence**

Events that are occurring while traveling (transportation) is happening. Could become a travel encounter depending on how the PCs are being transported. The NPCs may need breaks or to set up camp. You can reference my travel encounter section. But this may be completely skipped over either for time and/or story sake. The PCs could be blacked out or asleep the whole time.

## **Fight Encounters**

This is the standard D&D combat encounter though it can be mixed up depending on the desired outcome.

### **Objective Encounter**

This where there is a specific goal for the players to complete. I will often state this ahead of time either out of character or in character however it is done I personally feel at least the general concept to be known to the players and all players should be on the same page. The goal could be as complex as including another encounter type that does not involve combat like a puzzle or as simple as you need to defeat this enemy possibly involving one of the below encounters depicted.

### **BBEG (Mini-Boss) Encounter**

Boss encounter is the BBEG or a mini boss of some kind. It usually involves one hard to kill bad guy along with another encounter type (slaughter encounter) like waves of minions that use some easy to manage and kill mechanic. Such as treating them as a swarm, horde, or extra.

### **Plot Device Encounter**

The name of this encounter is still pending for me. But encompassed some kind of plot device. Like the bridge needs to be destroyed. A device needs to be turned off or on. Or an NPC needs to be escorted, rescued, or etc.. It is kind of open-ended and may need the use of non-combat encounters or scenes listed below.

### **Slaughter Encounter**

This is your murder hobos dream encounter. Though it is just called a slaughter encounter for my sake it does not have to involve slaughtering the opposing force. But it is just a straight up fight usually though I have been experimenting with several approaches.

### **Assassin (Takedown) Encounter**

I have not quite mastered this encounter type in any of my campaigns but I also have not had too many opportunities and I hope to have more soon.

This encounter involves the PCs doing their best not to get spotted while they take out guards one by one.

You need to have a 5 or more degree scale of detection for something like this to work. Detection / Alertness of the enemy can not be black and white.

### **Growth Encounter**

This is more about the intent behind the Fight. And is mostly here to make me think of why this combat is important both in game and out of game. What purpose does it serve? The purpose doesn't need to be revealed right away for an encounter such as this though it can help.

The fight could be about creating a bond between players and/or their NPC companions or it could be about revealing story, lore and/or intel. It could be about achieving a goal set by the story or players. It could be as simple as leveling the players up.

Whatever it is, it is about making sure that something comes out of the encounter that progresses the characters, players, and/or story forward.

### **Wave Encounter**

This is a fairly basic encounter type where waves of enemies are thrown at the character in a tournament style scenario. There could be an x amount of rounds characters need to survive for or x amount of enemies they need to takedown (kill).

## **Social Encounters**

These are encounters where the characters are talking and roleplaying with NPC and/or other PCs. This prioritizes roleplay above all else. But still use mechanics at the bare minimum to make sure every player has a turn and chance to communicate their character's actions. Mechanics also can be used to give players who are inexperienced or dislike roleplay a way to either get inspiration with their roleplay or avoid the roleplay altogether. So I use the social mechanic guideline for order and inspiration.

All these encounters have way different mechanics sometimes but you will notice they all follow similar themes and set of sequences despite the mechanic being different therefore explanation on the sequence level may be shared across all the encounters.

### **Convince Encounter**

This is a straightforward encounter type that involves PC(s) and/or NPC(s) trying to convince NPC(s) and/or PC(s) of something. Maybe a round or two. May not need any mechanics, could be simple one time roll or more drawn out.

#### **Agenda Sequence**

This is the PC(s) chance to talk among each other in character or out character and figure out what they want to accomplish and what their goals are.

This also is where the PC(s) or NPC(s) that are leading the encounter have a chance to state what will happen in the encounter. Depending how formal the encounter is this could be done out of character. But in a more formal setting like stated below this would be in character. And the character(s) speaking would have the spotlight.

No rebuttals should occur really during this sequence as this sequence should mostly just clarify what the encounter is for.

#### **Turn Sequence**

This is a turn-based event where each player and in some cases NPC have their own turn and spotlight in a turn determined much like initiative in combat is. Each PC or in some cases NPC has a chance to declare their actions out of character and then roleplay their actions in character after the declaration. The mechanics of what this could entail is written elsewhere and won't be talked about here.

But essentially this involves every PC and NPC having a chance to get the Spotlight and do what they want to do. Each turn could be a few seconds to over an hour depending on the encounter type and the urgency.

### **Rebuttal Sequence**

Essentially this is an out of turn rebuttal to what someone said or did in a turn sequence. This gives each PC or NPC a chance to respond and react specifically to what a PC or NPC did or said on their turn. I tend to try to keep these short but you really have to feel out the room and let things flow naturally in the direction that is fun and productive. But at any point you could move back into a turn sequence.

### **Spotlight Sequence**

This does happen within a turn sequence and can happen throughout the encounter. Whenever a player has some good roleplay going, let them have the stage and let them play out their spotlight. In these social encounters this usually means they are just handling their character. Main thing is to let the roleplay speak, if you need a roll from them, wait till later on or when there is a break in the roleplay. And let that roleplay have weight on the roll.

## **Interrogation Encounter**

### **PCs Interrogating Encounter**

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This is a break from the back and forth / turn order system. This is a free for all / free roam time for the PC(s) and NPC(s). Especially in an interrogation encounter this may involve just the PCs talking among themselves or with allies. Sharing the data or insights they collected as well as their future plan(s) of approach. This could be a time for the prisoner NPC or PC to be left alone to their own devices. (Maybe allowing them to go into some kind escape encounter)

Though in other types of social encounters a recess is a moment for the PCs to optionally talk with the NPCs one on one. I usually improv or pre-plan different activities that each NPC to be doing in different areas of the environment.

Then allow the PCs are able to approach the NPCs as they would like. The PCs usually have enough time to approach at least two NPCs. PCs can gather intel this way or bond with NPCs. The bonding, smaller convenience encounters, or intel gathering can help the PCs by giving them a bonus or ADV in a turn sequence when the recess is over.

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### **Assembly Encounter**

This is a gathering of a large group of people.

### **Council Encounter**

This is a form of assembly where there is a council of NPCs/PCs or a singular leader NPC/PC that has gathered a group of NPCs/PCs. This often needs to be run formally. And involve the main council of NPCs/PCs or main leader doing the majority of the talking. But community voices may be heard. So at a certain points the audience may be called to come up and make their claim or ask a question.

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### **Diplomacy Encounter**

This is an encounter where most often on the simplistic level the players want to try to make an alliance with NPC(s). Or on a more complex level achieve some kind of political goal. This typically takes place around some kind of table.

Mechanically essentially this encounter follows the below sequences very closely and most likely the most formally in my experience. Each side states their position and goal of the

encounter. This can also be like an introduction. (in and out of character). Then each character has their own turn and spotlight. With the rebutted occurring as needed. Then a recess happens at the end of each round. Each round is typically an hour or more of time. And the encounter may only last 1 to 3 rounds.

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### **Decision Encounter**

This is a formation of a group to vote on some serious formal decision. It could be anything but as of late I have used it most often for trials. To determine the guilt of a NPC or PC. It may be run very similar to a council encounter or real life courtroom.

Turns might be as simple as a group of NPCs or the PCs stating their vote on guilt. Or coming to stage to make a declaration statement of evidence / witness accounts and testimonies.

Depending on how formal it is you might assign certain NPCs or PCs to play different roles such as a lawyer, prosecutor, judge, or jury. However you set up the minute details and/or mechanics the flow is roughly the same as the above encounters.

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## **R&D Encounters**

These are encounters where a NPC or PCs are undergoing research or development of a new technology, item, spell, ritual, or understanding. This could involve a whole array of different varying mechanics depending on a variety of factors like what activity is being performed. But

this could be as simple as letting roleplay control the outcome or as complex as several rolls and time needed for varying degrees of success.

### **Downtime R&D Scene**

This is an R&D encounter that is not rushed and can take place of several hours, days, weeks, or even months. Can also easily and most of the time be done out of session.

### **Urgent R&D Encounter**

This is an R&D encounter that is urgent and must be done in session and typically involves other types of encounter such as a combat encounter in order to create the urgency. Round will only be a few seconds or a few minutes.

### **Ritual Blueprint Encounter (Arcane Engineering Scene)**

#### **What it is:**

A “choose-your-procedure” encounter where the group designs (or salvages) a ritual/spell/arcane craft through a **chain of small, meaningful decisions**. Every micro-choice is a lever: it changes **cost, risk, side effects, and aesthetic outcome** (what it looks/feels like), without hard-locking you into any one ruleset.

#### **How it runs (system-agnostic flow):**

1. **Intent & Stakes** — define goal + constraints + what failure means (misfire, attention drawn, moral cost, collateral, etc.)
2. **Component Passes** — players choose levers (materials, symbols, medium, incantation style, gestures, timing/alignment, cleansing/attire, emotional state, offerings). *Every option = benefit + complication/requirement.*
3. **Calibration** — patch missing parts, bargain for shortcuts, or accept flaws to stabilize
4. **Execution / Stress Test** — roleplay + 1–3 key rolls (or one “ritual check”). Misses default to **partial success with weirdness** (the snafu)
5. **Aftermath & Notebook** — lock the quirks/limits into canon; turn residue/backlash/bargains into future hooks

## **Intrigue Encounters**

These are encounters that provide mental stimulation to the players. They may require tough decisions either emotionally or mentally/ With emotion or mental challenges to the players. They could require heavy thought or discussion on the situation. They may be very thought provoking situations. But could also scratch curiosity itch and involve just simply exploring discovering loot, secrets, lore, and/or story.

I consider dungeon crawls to be made of these encounters. With combat scattered in between. These encounters also make for short little non-combat situations. And can also be great to build up to over time.

These encounters can be equal rolling and roleplay or one sided. There is not a set mechanic for any single encounter type rather mechanics really depending on the situation and players.

## **Mystery Encounters**

Mystery encounters are where something is trying to be solved or discovered by the players.

### **Detective Encounter**

This is where the players are trying to solve a murder, kidnapping (disappearance), theft, or strange happenings within closed or open environment. They are going around talking to NPCs having miniature interrogation encounters. And trying to figure out what has happened or will happen.

### **Explore Encounter**

Explore encounters I personally think are the easiest to do. You just literally let your players go in a sandbox environment and let them explore. Though this can be the easiest it is dependent a lot on your players ability to roleplay and creatively think. You are desbricing the world and letting youplayer choose what to interact with. If your players do not interact with the world and just sit there. Then this won't work or be that easy..

### **Loot Encounter**

This is a situation where your characters have the chance to find loot or grab as much loot as they can. It is a sub encounter put within other encounters where the goal is to give you player something cool, useful, or relevant to the story.

## **Indiana Jones Encounters**

This is a stereotypical dungeon crawl scenario and involves all sorts of small encounters like traps and puzzles that PCs must solve before time runs out.

### **Traps Encounter**

Just as it says. This is a trap door or trap mechanism of some kind that can deliver some kind of damaging or threatening event. Such as the walls closing in or a boulder falling down. Usually

it's important to have multiple levels of allowing the PC to escape. To a reasonable level the more opportunities the PC has to escape or take partial damage the better.

### **Puzzle Encounter**

This basic puzzle encounter. The PCs may need to solve to end another encounter such as a trap or combat. Or maybe this puzzle starts another encounter. It is usually a transition point. A Puzzle should be easy to solve and you should expect or at allow meta gaming especially if the players are inexperienced. Easy to solve does not mean it can't be clever or immediately difficult at face value. But it means that there are multiple ways for the PCs to solve the puzzle OR to at least get clues to solve the puzzle.

### **Dilemma Encounters**

These are encounters where the players are at a crossroad. An important decision must be made that may impact the character, the story, the world, and/or others in some significant way. This may be a no win situation. Where the players are just looking for the least bad path to take. Or it could be just a difficult one.

### **Moral Encounters**

This is where the dilemma involves a moral decision and has moral impact. These can be broken down into four types: **truth versus loyalty**, **individual versus community**, **short term versus long term**, and **justice versus virtue**.

## **Travel Encounters**

These are encounters that happen when the party is traveling. In most games even my own these are for the most part skipped. I only do this type of encounter if the players are traveling to a new location even then I might move past them quickly depending on the players, the story, and my mind set.

### **Road Encounters**

In my mechanics there are several activities players can do while traveling. As well as roleplay that can be done. The road is a great place for player interaction or NPC(s) interaction with the player. Players can ask an NPC(s) questions or bond with the NPC(s) in some way.

Outside of player activities and actions the GM can have a random encounter occur. I personally try to keep these short and simple because it is very easy in my games for myself to get side tracked and for a rabbit hole to occur.

With that in mind the encounter should have a clear goal.

This goal could be as complex as telling an ongoing side or main story element like a fey following or treant following and making an appearance to say something, deliver intel, cause a disturbance, and/or test the players in some way.

Or the goal could be as simple as to distract the players with combat or explore encounter because the next area their going isn't made yet though only doing this should be avoided when possible.

If a goal is not clear but you still want to add flavor with an encounter then make it fast. Make it something that shouldn't take a lot of session time right off the bat. And it is simple. Such as an easier kill enemy getting a quick hit in. Or a goat standing in the road.

A road encounter can also be a great place to test a new group of players or to introduce the main story objective.

## **Camp Encounters**

After a long day on the road players need to rest. The encounter involves the players setting up camp and performing any number of activities and actions they would like / are able to depending on the rest that is needed.

I think players should be encouraged to talk among themselves and roleplay. Below this is highlighted in what's called a campfire scene.

Below I just remention everything stated in the above road encounter as the same elements apply.

Outside of player activities and actions the GM can have a random encounter occur. I personally try to keep these short and simple because it is very easy in my games for myself to get side tracked and for a rabbit hole to occur.

With that in mind the encounter should have a clear goal.

This goal could be as complex as telling an ongoing side or main story element like a fey following or treant following and making an appearance to say something, deliver intel, cause a disturbance, and/or test the players in some way.

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A camp encounter can also be a great place to test a new group of players or to introduce the main story objective.

### **Campfire Scene**

Campfire scene is the player interacting during a long or short rest. This does not actually need a campfire. And could take place anywhere anytime. It is heavy roleplay and really depends on the players to drive the events. You could use some social encounter aspects in here and have an impromptu turn based system to make sure each player has a chance to roleplay and make their voice heard so that one player does not steal the spotlight.

You can also think of this as a group spotlight where the entire group of PCs has the spotlight and is directing what is happening. If things go well the GM can just sit back and listen only interrupting if needed or if time is running out.