

LIVING FORGOTTEN REALMS

WRITER'S GUIDELINES

VERSION 1.6, MARCH 2009

Written by: Chris Tulach, D&D Organized Play Content Developer, Wizards of the Coast

SO YOU WANT TO WRITE FOR US?

Writing for the RPGA and *Living Forgotten Realms* (LFR) can be very rewarding, but there are certain expectations you should have before you even begin the writing process. We very much want our writers to succeed and look upon their work with LFR as a stepping stone to potentially doing more work with Wizards. Here are some expectations you should have before you even begin the writing process:

- You will be paid for your work, which means that we expect it to be done professionally, timely, and with proper communication to your writing director. Make certain to be responsive to your writing director and turn in your work at the deadline established.
- You must be able to be flexible to critical advice about your work. Adventures will be reviewed by your writing director, the Global Administration, and Wizards of the Coast.
- Wizards of the Coast will purchase your work, which means that we retain the right to alter, modify, or adjust your adventure in any way we see fit after it's purchased. You will be given a contract to sign for your work which gives us ownership of your adventure.
- You may be asked to write an adventure based on a summary from the LFR campaign staff, effectively "fleshing out" an already-approved adventure idea. In this case, work within the parameters of the guidelines given to you by your writing director.
- You will need to use Microsoft Word 2000 or better in order to write your adventure. The adventure template is in Word, and you should not use another word-processing program, as it may not carry over styles and formatting. If you

choose to use Microsoft Word 2007 or later, you should save your file as a .doc file, not a .docx file.

- Your adventures must be submitted in the English language, and need to follow the style guidelines present in the LFR Adventure Template. Adventures must not violate the RPGA's Standards of Content.
- You are writing an adventure, not telling a story. What you're doing by writing the adventure is laying the framework to enable the DM and players to have a great time and develop their own story from playing the adventure. Keep your adventure concise, focused, and flexible.

YOUR BEST RESOURCE

Before you even begin writing, you need to read the *Dungeon Master's Guide*, in particular chapters 3-6. This is the writer's bible for D&D; if you want to know how to write a good D&D adventure, the answer's in the DMG. After you're done reading it, you should probably read chapters 3-6 again.

This writer's document will not cover material presented in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*; rather it will deal specifically with concerns that affect writing for LFR and the RPGA.

CAMPAIGN ADMINISTRATION

The *Living Forgotten Realms* campaign is divided into 12 regions, which aid in the administration of a global shared-world campaign. Each real-world region is assigned an area of the Forgotten Realms. Players and DMs can participate in any region's adventures, and you can make a writing proposal to any region.

Each region is also administered by a group of three individuals, known as Regional Administrators. They are volunteers that represent Wizards of the Coast through their regional duties. These individuals each have a specific duty within

the structure of the campaign. The point-of-contact is responsible for acting as the regional liaison to the campaign for interested RPGA members; that person will likely be your first contact. The event manager is responsible for coordinating play in the region, usually working with conventions and helping to provide further investment for interested RPGA members. The writing director is responsible for coordinating adventure writing efforts, the foundation of play for the LFR campaign.

You'll most likely be spending most of your time interacting with the writing director. That individual will be directly responsible for the review and submission of your adventure to higher elements in the campaign administration.

All of the Regional Administrators are managed by the Global Administrators, a group of individuals directly contracted by Wizards of the Coast. They are not employees of Wizards of the Coast, but often act on behalf of the company for the campaign at large. Each Global Administrator is responsible for managing 4 regions, except for the Mini-Campaign Global Administrator, who is responsible for maintaining the annual mini-campaign. They report to the D&D Organized Play Content Developer.

The D&D Organized Play Content Developer is a full-time Wizards employee, part of the Organized Play department at Wizards. This individual is the final authority on adventure sanctioning and coordinates reviews with both Research & Development (R&D) and Novels to ensure that each adventure meets Wizards' standards.

More information on the campaign administration and who to contact can be found at www.wizards.com/rpga.

SUBMITTING A PROPOSAL

Each writing director may have their own criteria for accepting proposals; some may have an open call, and others may only have authors write to a pre-existing, approved adventure summary. If you want to write for a specific region, you should contact the point-of-contact for that region; that individual will forward your inquiry to the writing director.

Proposals are due well in advance of the actual work. It is many months from the time when a proposal is submitted to a writing director until the adventure is released for play. Even a proposal accepted by a writing director will most likely

receive feedback that will result in changes being made. A proposal accepted by a writing director could also be declined by a Global Administrator or the D&D Organized Play Content Developer. It's a good idea to expect change and be ready to make modifications in a short period of time if necessary.

ADVENTURE REVIEW PROCESS

When an adventure summary is accepted (with or without changes), you'll have a few weeks (at least 4) for your initial draft to be turned in to your writing director. Expect to spend approximately 20-30 hours writing the first draft of your adventure; some adventures can be written in shorter periods of time, and others will take more time. The writing director will review your first draft and send you specific comments so you can prepare your adventure for the final draft.

Sometime after the first draft is submitted through the period of time that the final draft is being reviewed, the adventure may be playtested. Certainly, you can (and should) playtest your adventure with the help of some local players. Administrators may also assign playtesters to give an impartial review of the adventure's playability.

After you've made adjustments to the adventure, you'll submit the final draft back to the writing director. The writing director will give it a final review and send it up the administrative chain, where it will be reviewed by the Global Administration and the D&D Organized Play Content Developer.

Once the final draft has been approved, you'll be contacted by the D&D Organized Play Content Developer to receive your contract. Please ensure that your contract is returned in a timely manner to Wizards.

Your adventure may not be available for play soon after you sign the contract; LFR adventures are being released on a weekly schedule and it may be several weeks or a couple months before your adventure is orderable through the RPGA database.

WRITING FOR D&D 4TH EDITION

D&D 4th Edition has significant design differences from previous editions of the game. If you've written adventures for older editions of D&D, the same rules may not apply for 4th Edition. Combats are more dynamic, using interesting terrain and

multiple enemies. An integrated skill challenge system exists to provide adventures with plenty of ways to earn experience outside of combat. Many of the preconceptions and assumptions about the way the game works have changed.

Read the *Dungeon Master's Guide*, chapters 3-6 to get more information on how to design 4th Edition encounters and adventures.

A QUICK D&D FORMAT GUIDE

4th Edition D&D has some specific terms that are unique to the game, and therefore you might need some guidance on how to represent those terms in text. It is very important to follow the formatting information listed below, as inconsistencies make it confusing for the reviewers of your material.

- **Races, classes, and paragon paths** should be lower case and in the standard font. Examples include dwarf, wizard, and combat veteran.
- **Feats, skills, and rituals** should be proper names (first letter of each word capitalized) and in the standard font. Examples include Toughness, Athletics, and Hand of Fate.
- **Powers** (character and monster) should be lower case and italicized. Examples include *tide of iron*, *force volley*, and *astral stride*.
- **Artifacts** should be proper names and italicized. Examples include the *Eye of Vecna* and the *Wand of Orcus*.
- **Magic items** should be lower case and italicized. Specific weapons, armor, and implements should be listed with the enhancement bonus first, then the property, and lastly the name of the item. Examples include *+1 magic longsword*, *+2 trollskin hide armor*, and *+4 staff of fiery might*. If you're listing a magic weapon or armor without specifying the exact item, list the property first, then the general class of item (weapon or armor), and lastly the bonus. Examples include *duelist's weapon +1* and *delver's armor +5*. Neck slot magic items are listed with the bonus last. Examples include *safewing amulet +2* and *elven cloak +4*.

WRITING FOR THE REALMS

The Forgotten Realms has undergone large changes to its geography, culture, and timeline. The detail-soaked past of the Realms has been eschewed for a more dangerous, adventure-filled Realms set almost

100 years later after a cataclysmic disaster known as the Spellplague ravaged Toril.

You'll want to read the *Forgotten Realms Campaign Guide* to get a better appraisal of the changes. However, there are some specific concerns that impact writing adventures for *Living Forgotten Realms* that we'll address here.

- Don't focus your adventure on the past too much. In other words, don't provide tons of background that is extraneous to the adventure. Keep history light and very adventure-specific. You don't need to tell folks that "the Spellplague did this!" or "you know that this ancient tomb was founded in 867 DR by..." This intimidates new players and creates a situation that makes the adventure too "dense" with facts. The old Realms is gone; focus on what's going on in the adventure. Ask yourself this question: Is this information really needed for the play of the adventure? If it isn't, then don't use it. (With that, don't try to shoehorn history into an adventure as an excuse to "create more history" or "tell the story of what happened decades ago.") Don't try to resurrect the past just because you want to remind people of what happened in the interim. Let the novels talk about those elements.
- Forgotten Realms story elements that are new to the 4th Edition Realms aren't new to the inhabitants of the world. These things happened generations ago. Most folk never talk about the Spellplague, the return of Netheril, etc. Events that are "new to you" aren't current topics of conversation or things that weigh on people's minds. Tymander and Akanul, for example, aren't "new" places in the context of the game world; they've been around as long as many people remember.
- Use the civilized points of light that are presented in the *Forgotten Realms Campaign Guide* rather than creating new ones when possible. We want to avoid adding more "dots on the map" as each place needs to be assigned a location and could potentially create problems with future projects. It is fine to create tons of adventure locations, but stuff that goes on a world map will likely not be approved.
- In short, you're writing a D&D adventure that happens to be set in the Forgotten Realms. You're not writing a novel or a history book. Keep

your adventure focused on gameplay and not extraneous details.

WRITING FOR THE RPGA

There are some important concerns, apart from the specifics of writing for LFR, that impact writing adventures for the RPGA.

- You are writing for a timed adventure. One RPGA adventure round is a 3.5 - 4 hour play experience. It takes approximately 45 minutes - 1 hour to DM one combat encounter, so you should try to keep combat encounters at about 3-4 per adventure round. Skill challenges take approximately 20-30 minutes to DM, and non-challenge encounters usually take no more time than skill challenges. Keep this in mind when designing your adventure.
- You are writing for players of varying skill levels and for groups of random strangers that happen to play the game together. Some people have played other adventures together, and some have not. Some players might have experienced and retained the nuances of a story arc, and others might have not. Make sure that you write your adventure to be flexible so the DM feels empowered to easily alter the adventure when necessary, and the players don't feel like they need to have played any other adventures to understand what's going on in the one you're writing.
- Follow the RPGA Standards of Content to determine what's acceptable for Wizards to distribute publicly. Adventures need to be created that can be played by the majority of our audience, and need to emphasize appropriate elements for a fantasy game. The RPGA does not create mature-only adventures. A good rule of thumb on depiction of sensitive elements is if the adventure was a movie, it should get a PG or PG-13 rating; if it was a video game, it should get a T (for teen) rating or less.

WRITING IN THE ADVENTURE TEMPLATE

To ensure that your adventure needs little technical work after you've completed the first draft, you should understand the specifics of the adventure template (a Word file you'll use to write your adventure). Below are a few basics; each section of the adventure template will be explained in greater detail.

- Ensure that you are using the styles present in the adventure template and not creating new ones or using the incorrect styles for the section you're writing. Follow the formatting of the adventure template as precisely as possible. This is very important, as incorrect styles and formatting will absorb a large amount of editing time, and may even result in an approved adventure being rejected or delayed.
- Check your grammar and spelling. Don't just rely on software to catch errors; do a thorough read-through. If you don't excel at spotting grammatical or spelling mistakes, you should have someone else you know read over your adventure to catch them for you. Two pairs of eyes reviewing a document are always better than one.
- One particular grammar note bears mentioning: use of future tense (will and should) when describing action should always be avoided. If you're not used to writing in present tense and typically drop a lot of future tense uses in your work, give it a thorough review to remove those uses where appropriate. Using present tense compliments descriptions of action. For example, if you state "The ogre will attack when the PCs open the door," try instead "The ogre attacks when the PCs open the door." You'll most often find this useful to remember in the tactics section of combat encounters.
- In the template, chevrons (< >) are used to denote text that should be overtyped and replaced with other appropriate text in the same style. If these chevrons aren't present, you should retain the text shown (this is especially true with the boilerplate at the beginning and some areas of the rewards summary). The examples can be removed, even though they don't contain chevrons.

TITLE PAGE

Most of the information on this page should be completed or known before you even begin to write.

- **<CODE1-1>**: This is where the adventure's code is placed. The code consists of the first 4 letters of the adventure's region name, the year number (starting with 1), and the number that corresponds to the order in which the adventure was released. If you need help with this, ask your writing director.
- **Reviewed by:** The writing director and Global Administrator reviewing your work have their names listed here. You can leave this for the writing director to fill in if you don't know the names or proper spelling of the administrators.
- **Legal text:** This should not be altered in any way. The only people that have permission to alter legal text are the Global Administrators and the D&D Organized Play Content Developer.

BOILERPLATE

The opening section of the adventure is known as the boilerplate. It contains the standard information for DMing *Living Forgotten Realms* adventures. With only two exceptions, you will not alter the text presented in this section.

- **RPGA Sanctioned Play:** The fourth paragraph under this header has a space for a date to be entered for the retirement of the adventure. The date should always be expressed as December 31, 20XX, with the year of retirement 2011 for adventures premiering in 2008 and 2009, 2012 for adventures premiering in 2010, and 2013 for adventures premiering in 2011.
- **Appropriate Character Levels:** The first sentence under this header asks for the level range of the adventure. It should always be a four-level range. The level ranges are 1-4, 4-7, 7-10, 11-14, 14-17, 17-20, 21-24, 24-27, and 27-30.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

A brief summary of "what has come before" should be given here. It's meant to give the DM important background information that directly relates to the gameplay of the adventure. Information here should be concise; not more than a paragraph or two in length. Don't include information that's not necessary for the DM here.

PLAYER'S AND DM'S INTRODUCTION

These sections are used to set up the adventure for the players and the DM. The first read-aloud section for the players is usually found here.

Read-aloud sections, no matter where they are found, should be especially concise. Players often lose focus if there is a long read-aloud section in an adventure. Keep your read-aloud sections short (no more than a paragraph or two during the introduction and only a few sentences elsewhere). Provide bullet points for the DM's use to summarize important information and rely on the DM to impart this information conversationally with the players.

ENCOUNTER TEMPLATES

Use the encounter templates provided; examples exist for combat encounters, skill challenge encounters, and non-challenge encounters (which will often be roleplaying and don't involve characters gaining XP). Total XP for each encounter is listed at the heading of each encounter; everywhere else in the adventure, you'll list the XP per character.

Make sure you follow the statistics blocks closely so the information displays correctly when your adventure is converted into its final form. All monsters or NPCs the PCs fight must be listed in the statistics blocks section, regardless of their original source.

Information on building encounters can be found in the template and in the "Adventure Parameters" section of this document.

MAPS

All combat encounters are required to have a map section following the encounter information section and statistics blocks. With only very few exceptions which must be approved at all levels of the administration, maps should be built using *Dungeon Tiles*, a Wizards of the Coast product designed for DMs to produce fast, visually appealing tactical environments. You can take digital photos of your tile layouts and add appropriate marks in editing software or use a map program to assemble the maps and then add marks.

In the near future, D&D Insider will have a *Dungeon Tiles Mapper* application available for free, which you can use to build your encounters. If

you need access to additional tiles that are not available in the free version of the application when building your combat encounters, let your writing director know so access can be granted to you.

You'll need to include a manifest (list) of tiles that you used on the same page that you export an image of the map. This makes it easier for the DM to know which sets of tiles you're using. Don't use more than 2 of the same set of tiles to build your encounter. Use more recent sets when possible. If you need help with your maps, talk to your writing director.

REWARDS SUMMARY

Most of the information specific to writing rewards for your adventure can be found in the Adventure Parameters section of this document.

- Story award codes are the four-letter abbreviation for the region plus the code number as given to you by the writing director. These code numbers will most likely be different than the adventure number.
- Adventure questions are optional and the information listed here will be decided with the writing director's guidance.

NEW RULES

List any rules items originating from a book other than the *Player's Handbook*, *Dungeon Master's Guide*, or *Monster Manual*. DMs are expected to own copies of those three books. Most of the time, you'll only be listing magic items or new rituals here - things that the characters found during the adventure.

APPENDIX

The appendix section is a sort of "catch-all" template designed for you to use as you see fit. You can place an overland (non-tactical) map, a player handout (good also for summarizing large bits of information), a puzzle, or anything else that is integral to the play of the adventure. Avoid using an appendix to give non-essential background information.

ADVENTURE PARAMETERS

Whereas the previous section on the adventure template dealt with the technical side of your adventure, you'll find the creative direction you need that's specific to writing LFR adventures in this section.

ADVENTURE SCOPE

The scope of the adventure is determined by the adventure's tier - heroic, paragon, or epic. Depending on what tier you're writing for, characters should interact and affect the world of your adventure in different ways.

In the heroic tier, PCs deal with threats that are local in scope. They might help out a beleaguered merchant, stop a threat from overrunning a village, or explore a cave near civilization. It doesn't mean that the adventure has to start in a small locale; only that the impact the adventurers have once they've completed the adventure doesn't affect many other people.

At the paragon tier, PCs deal with threats that are regional in scope. They might have to clear a vital trade route, solve a court mystery, or explore a distant, dangerous realm. The adventures often have impact on a bigger scale; often the fates of many hangs in the balance or the stakes are high enough that success or failure might bring about substantial changes to an area such as a kingdom.

At the epic tier, PCs deal with threats that are widespread, affecting continents, the entire world, or large areas of the planes. They might stop a worldwide conspiracy, prevent a massive war, or defend against a planar invasion. Adventures deal with massive threats to the campaign world and success or failure may result in global change. Epic-tier adventures only exist at the global level and are handled by the Global Administrators; regional adventures cap out at paragon.

ADVENTURE LEVELS

The adventure you're writing will be for a small level range, which should make your task of designing interesting and fun encounters that fit the creative vision much easier than if you wrote for a large range of levels.

You should always use the baseline of 5 PCs with at least one character in the group representing each role (controller, defender, leader, and striker). You'll be providing the DM advice for adjusting the

encounter to deal with groups of 4 or 6 PCs (see "Building and Adjusting Encounters", below).

Each adventure contains a low-level version and a high-level version. You'll be modifying each encounter to work with both versions; the only difference between the low-level and high-level version of your adventure is the enemies will generally be higher level (and possibly some treasure differences).

CREATING NEW GAME ELEMENTS

Creation of wholly new game elements is only to be used when absolutely necessary. Ask yourself if the game element can be recreated using an existing published element in a Wizards product. All new game elements must be submitted with the adventure summary. The mechanics will be reviewed at Wizards and we will provide feedback around the same time that the adventure summary feedback is provided.

Creation of new game elements (aside from monster and trap modifications, see "Adjusting Encounters" and "Monster and Trap Naming" below) should be very rare. Most adventures should not have new game elements, and no adventure should have more than one new game element. The only new game elements that will be accepted are new monsters and new traps. New character options (including new magic items and rituals) are not accepted.

BUILDING AND ADJUSTING ENCOUNTERS

Building Encounters: Use the advice in the *Dungeon Master's Guide* to help you build interesting encounters. Here are some helpful things to remember:

- Each combat encounter should feature multiple foes (unless it's against a solo enemy). Make sure you vary your enemies' roles so that each small group of enemies is doing something different. For example, rather than having an encounter against 5 skirmishers, try throwing in a pair of soldiers and a lurker to make things more dynamic.
- Use interesting terrain features. Look at the sets of Dungeon Tiles for inspiration, since you'll be using those to build your maps. Don't be afraid to be creative and utilize the fantastic with your terrain choices. Starting on page 60 of the

Dungeon Master's Guide, there's excellent information on building encounter areas, and there's a bunch of sample terrain types for you to draw inspiration from. Have terrain that characters can interact with in different ways (some might encourage movement, some might have a hazardous effect, some might be destructible, etc.). You don't have to "overload" one encounter with dynamic terrain pieces; rather, spread them out a little when possible. A good rule of thumb is that at least 2 of your combat encounters/trap encounters in an adventure should have exciting terrain elements.

- Give all PCs reasons to interact with skill challenges and traps. Make sure that your challenges have a number of primary skills so each character might have something they're at least passable at to contribute to the success of the encounter. Wrap traps in combat encounters or have them displayed tactically with multiple points of interaction.
- Use the skill challenge system the way you want. Be creative and just follow the guidelines in Chapter 5 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*. Reference the chart on page 42 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide* to get an idea of what is acceptable for skill DCs and damage for the level of your encounter. Leave the DM room to improvise and make the encounter their own.

Adjusting Encounters: You'll need to adjust combat encounters in two ways in every adventure you write. All adventures have two versions - a low-level and high-level - and when you write an encounter, you need to ensure that it is adjusted either up or down as appropriate for the version.

When you write the encounter, you'll probably have either the low-level version or high-level version in mind; all you need to do is adjust the levels of all the enemies up or down until you reach the target XP for the encounter. The rules for doing this are on page 174 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide* under the header "Increasing or Decreasing Level." This is very easy to do; you'll just modify hit points (as listed on page 184 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*), modify attacks and defenses by 1/per level adjusted, and modify damage by 1/per 2 levels adjusted. You can also modify initiative, skill bonuses, and ability check bonuses by 1/per 2 levels adjusted if you'd like, but this is not required. You can adjust traps in much the same way; modify the trap's attacks and

defenses by 1/per level adjusted, modify damage by 1/per 2 levels adjusted, and modify skill DCs used to interact with the trap by 1/per 2 levels adjusted. Modifying skill challenges is also easy; simply increase the DCs needed for success in all circumstances by 1/per 2 levels adjusted. You don't need to modify skill DCs outside of skill challenges.

Each combat encounter in an adventure has a "Scaling the Encounter" section that provides the DM advice for adjusting the encounter to 4 or 6 PCs. The way in which each encounter is adjusted should be specifically listed in the text of the encounter. As a writer, you have the following options (depending on the combat) for scaling the encounter for 4 or 6 PCs:

- Modify the number of normal enemies (that is, enemies that are not minions, elite, or solo) in each combat by 1. Remove/add an enemy whose level is as close to the encounter level as possible. Make certain to take into account tactical differences in the play of the encounter after you remove or add an enemy.
- If you have only a solo enemy, take its hit point total and divide it by 5. Deduct or add that result from or to the creature's hit point total.
- One of the above methods should work for most combat encounters. However, if it doesn't work, modify the level of each creature by 1 (see the rules on "Increasing or Decreasing Level" in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*, page 174, for more information). Just modify hit points and attacks/defenses by 1.
- You should not modify traps and skill challenges for the "Scaling the Encounter" section; only combats need to be modified.

Monster and Trap Naming: If you modify an existing monster or trap in any way, you need to rename it from the base monster. The renaming needs to take place in the setup text of the appropriate encounter as well as the statistics block.

- If all you've done is leveled the monster or trap up or down (making all the necessary adjustments), simply add the new level in parentheses after the monster name (i.e., "Goblin Sharpshooter (Level 4)").
- If you change, add, or delete any information from the base monster or trap that is outside of the leveling process (such as changing a power's

damage type, swapping out one power for a different one, or changing the skills listed), you need to give the monster or trap a new name. When you adjust the monster's or trap's level for the other version (low- or high-level), you'll add the level notation after the monster's or trap's name. Also, add a notation after the stat block of the monster or trap you've modified to give specifics of the changes made (you don't need to add a notation if you've only leveled a monster or trap up or down).

- When coming up with a new name for a monster or trap you've modified, try to use a name that's unique to the adventure so it's very distinctive from "common terms." For example, if you modify a troll to give it resist cold and a cold-based attack power, don't call it an ice troll; choose something more unique like blizzardborn troll.

WORKING WITHIN A BUDGET

Each adventure has a "budget" of experience points and treasure that you can assign throughout the adventure. While there is flexibility in how you use the budget, there are some guidelines you should observe:

- Make sure you include at least 2 combat encounters in every adventure. Combat lies at the heart of D&D play, and most players expect to use their combat-oriented powers and abilities often.
- Don't include more than 5 combat encounters in an adventure, and only do so if they're all relatively easy and there's very few non-combat encounters (one or less).
- Look at your adventure flow; ensure that there's not too much game-world time passing from one encounter to another. Action points are meant to be earned, and the only way in which it's meaningful is if the players have the opportunity to hit milestones and use their extra action points in subsequent encounters. Most (if not all) of the action in an adventure should take place within a short period of time (a day or so). You don't want characters taking extended rests after each encounter; this eliminates a lot of the resource decisions and usually means that combat encounters are much easier.
- Most treasure found is not being used by enemies; it's hoarded by them or found

incidentally as a result of exploring places unknown. Enemies should only rarely have a magic item on their person, and if it's being used against the PCs, it should be figured into the level of the encounter (using the rules on pages 174-175 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*). There's very little "looting of the bodies" in 4th Edition, and most of the time, it only results in gaining gold or possibly a story award (a critical note, battle plans, a map to a hidden area, etc.).

- Give out at least 4 treasure bundles in each adventure and no more than 8. Ensure that there's at least one magic item for the low-level version only and one for the high-level version only.
- Find ways to work in gold earned in the adventure. Only be concerned with finding ways to add in money that all PCs get as treasure; the "More Gold" option exists for PCs that don't want a magic item pick.

XP BUDGET (HEROIC/PARAGON TIER)

Adventure Level	Max Level	Enc. XP	Quest XP
1-4 (Low-2nd)	6/5/4	375	25 / 125
1-4 (High-4th)	8/7/6	525	35 / 175
4-7 (Low-5th)	9/8/7	600	40 / 200
4-7 (High-7th)	11/10/9	900	60 / 300
7-10 (Low-8th)	12/11/10	1050	70 / 350
7-10 (High-10th)	14/13/12	1500	100 / 500
11-14 (Low-12th)	16/15/14	2100	140 / 700
11-14 (High-14th)	18/17/16	3000	200/1000
14-17 (Low-15th)	19/18/17	3600	240/1200
14-17 (High-17th)	21/20/19	4800	320/1600
17-20 (Low-18th)	22/21/20	6000	400/2000
17-20 (High-20th)	24/23/22	8400	560/2800

Adventure Level: Each adventure is written for one level range of 4 levels. Each encounter in an adventure has both a low-level version and a high-level version. Next to the notation of "low" or "high" is the average encounter level for that version. Encounters can go up to 2 levels higher or 2 levels lower than the average.

Max Level: This describes the maximum level for an individual enemy in an encounter; the first number is for regular enemies or minions, the second is for elite enemies, and the last is for solo enemies. Individual enemies within an encounter can go up to 4 levels higher or lower than the average. Elite enemies should only go 3 levels

higher or lower than the average, and solo enemies should only go 2 levels higher or lower than the average.

Example: A level 3 encounter (about 150 XP per character) for a levels 1-4 adventure (low version) could contain a level 6 skirmisher (50 XP per character), a level 2 elite soldier (50 XP per character), four level 3 minions (30 XP per character), and a level 1 controller (20 XP per character). You've now used 150 XP of your budget for this encounter. To satisfy the high-level version of the adventure, you could simply increase the levels of all the enemies by 2 (more on that in "Building and Adjusting Encounters") and you'll have a level 5 encounter worth 210 XP per character. You couldn't put a level 7 skirmisher in the low-level version of your adventure, because it's more than 4 levels from the average encounter level of the adventure.

Encounter XP: This is expressed in XP earned per character for the whole adventure. You have this much per character XP to assign to the adventure as a whole. You have control over how you apportion that XP, as long as you follow the guidelines here.

- To find out how much XP a skill challenge is worth per character, simply calculate the total XP value and divide by 5. Remember, a skill challenge has a level and a complexity; the most complex skill challenges are worth as much as a full combat encounter of XP, but less challenging ones aren't (see page 72 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*).
- To find out how much XP a monster is worth per character, reference the monster's level on the table on page 120 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*. Then, simply divide its XP value by 5.
- A group of four minions is worth one equivalent level monster. Simply use the XP value for one monster of the appropriate level and divide by 5; if you have less (or more) minions, just multiply or divide further to get the correct XP value. For example, if you have a group of four level 3 minions, they're worth the same as a standard monster of the same level - 150 XP total. Divide this number by 5 to get the per character value - 30 XP. If you want to add 2 more minions (for a total of 6), just add half again of the per character value - in this case, add 15 to 30, so that a group of 6 level 3 minions is worth 45 XP per character.

- With writing director approval, your adventure can "go over budget" a bit (no more than 20% of the maximum XP for the adventure), but the total XP earned per character cannot exceed the maximum. That is, the characters will actually earn more XP than they receive at the end of the adventure, which is something to be avoided. Unless there's a really good reason to go over budget, don't do it.

Quest XP: This is expressed in XP earned per character; the value before the slash is minor quest XP, and the value after the slash is major quest XP.

- Each adventure allots one minor quest's worth of XP equal to the average level of the version (low or high).
- You can "steal" the amount of quest XP listed from your encounter XP if you want to add a second minor quest to your adventure. Conversely, you can eliminate the quest XP and add it to your encounter XP if you want more XP for encounters.
- Major quest completion is something that usually takes more than one adventure to resolve. Make sure that you have your writing director's approval to put a major quest award in an adventure. Major quest awards typically only appear in about every three adventures or so. If you want to start a major quest in your adventure, it should be a story award that is listed at the end of the adventure. Starting or finishing a major quest in an adventure requires writing director approval.

TREASURE BUDGET (HEROIC/PARAGON TIER)

Adv. Level	Base gp + gp	Magic	Ritual
1-4 (Low-2nd)	75	50	2-6 100 / 50
1-4 (High-4th)	100	75	4-8 150 / 100
4-7 (Low-5th)	100	125	5-9 250 / 200
4-7 (High-7th)	150	250	7-11 500 / 450
7-10 (Low-8th)	150	350	8-12 700 / 650
7-10 (High-10th)	200	500	10-14 1000/950
11-14 (Low-12th)	1200	1300	12-16 2600/2550
11-14 (High-14th)	2200	2100	14-18 4200/4150
14-17 (Low-15th)	2200	3300	15-19 6600/6550
14-17 (High-17th)	6000	6500	17-21 13000/12950
17-20 (Low-18th)	8500	8500	18-22 17000/16950
17-20 (High-20th)	13500	12500	20-24 25000/24950

Adventure Level: Each adventure is written for one level range of 4 levels. Each encounter in an adventure has both a low-level version and a high-level version. Next to the notation of “low” or “high” is the average encounter level for that version. Encounters can go up to 2 levels higher or 2 levels lower than the average.

Base gp: This is the maximum amount of base gold piece reward that can be given in the adventure. It includes any treasure found as coins, gems, jewelry, art objects, etc. You should attempt to reward this much gold in an adventure, and possibly have multiple ways in which the PCs can get to this maximum.

+ **gp:** This is the amount of gold that a PC can select as an option if they do not want a magic item or ritual (if available). All adventures are required to have this option (and the specified amounts listed in the table) in the treasure section of the Rewards Summary under “More Gold.”

Magic: This is the range of levels of magic items that can be given out in an adventure, which are placed in treasure bundles. You can only place one magic item in each treasure bundle. You should not have magic items of every level in the range, since you only have a maximum of 8 treasure bundles in an adventure (this is in total for the adventure since treasure bundles are per adventure, not per low-level or high-level version). See “Creating Treasure Bundles” below for more information.

Ritual: This is the maximum gold piece market price worth of rituals that you can place in one treasure bundle. The number before the slash is the value if the rituals are placed on scrolls; the number after the slash is the value if the rituals are found in a ritual book. You can place more than one ritual in one treasure bundle.

CREATING TREASURE BUNDLES

Treasure bundles are the way that PCs find magic items above their level, and as such, you should endeavor to create bundles that have a wide variety of items to appeal to many different types of characters. No single adventure will be able to give out treasure that will be perfect for every PC; that’s why getting more gold is always an option. In fact,

since characters can only possess a number of “found” magic items equal to their level in *Living Forgotten Realms*, most of the time, a player will pick a gold/ritual/potion option for their character instead. Characters are able to purchase magic items of their level or less (see the *Living Forgotten Realms* Campaign Standards document for more information), which means that finding magic items is important, since those items will usually be higher than the character’s level. You’ll need to follow these parameters to create your treasure bundles:

- Characters can only use magic items and potions that are 4 levels higher than their current level or less, so be sure to not make your adventure too “top heavy” on the levels of the magic items given out. For instance, it is **possible** to write a levels 1-4 adventure where the lowest level magic item in any treasure bundle is 6th level, but that’s not a good idea, since that means that all 1st level characters that participate won’t have a desirable magic item option.
- You can give out a minimum of 4 treasure bundles in an adventure and a maximum of 8. If you give out 4 bundles, you should have at least 3 magic items - one for the low-level version only, one for both versions, and one for the high-level version only. The fourth bundle can be another magic item (preferably for both versions) or rituals.
- Most of your treasure bundles should be magic items. If you give out 4-5 treasure bundles, at least 3 should be magic items. Giving out 6 treasure bundles means you should have at least 4 magic items, 7 treasure bundles means you should have at least 5 magic items, and 8 treasure bundles means you should have at least 6 magic items.
- Remember, the “More Gold” option is not a treasure bundle. It is simply an amount the PC can take in lieu of selecting a treasure bundle that is then added to their total gold earned in the adventure.
- Always have at least 1/3 of your magic item bundles available for characters of both versions of the adventure. This means that those magic items will occupy a narrower level range than magic items for a specific version, since they need to be usable by all characters participating in the adventure. For example, a levels 1-4 adventure with 4 magic item bundles should

have one magic item that's levels 2-6 specified for the low-level version only, 2 magic items that are levels 4-6 for all versions, and one magic item that's levels 4-8 specified for the high-level version only.

- Giving out a consumable (such as a potion) plus extra gold is an option, but it does not have to be present in an adventure. The option should include the consumable and a value of gold equal to the amount in the "More Gold" option for the specific version played minus the market price of the consumable. Consumable use is under the same restriction as magic item use (that is, no more than 4 levels higher than the character's level), so be wary about giving out consumables that are too high of a level. In general, *potions of healing* (or similar-cost potions) are good for the heroic tier of play. A consumable option is not a treasure bundle (it's treated like a "More Gold" option).
- Giving out rituals either on scrolls or in ritual books is also an option as well (but, as with potions, it does not have to be present in an adventure). One treasure bundle can contain rituals on scrolls or in a ritual book. No more than two treasure bundles should contain rituals in an adventure. You cannot give out ritual scrolls and a ritual book in the same treasure bundle. Characters can possess as many "found" rituals as they want and are not under the same level restriction for ownership as found magic items.
- Formulas follow the same rules as rituals and can also be treated as consumables.
- Magic weapons and armor that are found during the adventure which enemies aren't using (the vast majority of the magic weapons and armor found) should not be specific on the exact type of weapon or armor. For example, the adventure could have a treasure bundle that has a *duelist's weapon +1* in it - if the PC selects that item, it can be any one light blade they want it to be. Once a PC makes the selection, the piece of treasure is now that specific magic weapon or armor for the remainder of the time the PC possesses it.
- If an enemy uses a magic item and that item appears in the treasure bundle, it can be the specific item used against the PCs in the adventure; for example, an enemy wearing a suit of +2 *curseforged scale armor* could have that specific suit of armor listed in a treasure bundle at the end of the adventure.

STORY AWARDS (OPTIONAL)

You can have up to 3 story awards in one adventure. A story award is something that doesn't have a real monetary value in the context of the *Living Forgotten Realms* campaign (that is, you can't buy it or sell it). It's usually linked to some activity in the adventure, and can be awarded to one or more PCs at the table. Some story awards are given to an entire group, and others are given out only to select individuals within the group. If you have story awards in your adventure, you must have at least one group story award; your second and third story award can be either a group award or a selective award.

Story awards are where you can get creative with game elements that link the characters to further adventure play or offer recognition for a job well done. Often times, a story award will link to a major quest, so in one adventure a character might receive a story award giving them a major quest, and a few adventures later they may complete the major quest and earn another story award related to it. Story awards rarely have any direct game mechanical benefit (except for completion of a major quest, which gives XP). DMs should take story awards into account when PCs conduct skill challenges that are applicable to the award. Here are some examples of story awards:

- A favor from an important person
- An object (such as a key) that seems to have little value, but might be important in a later adventure (object awards must be group awards)
- Notice from an individual or organization (could be a benefit or a hindrance)
- Information valuable to later adventure play
- A title, badge of merit, or recognition
- Admission to an organization (or promotion from within that organization)
- A Linked Portal key to a specific area (see pages 307-308 in the *Player's Handbook* for more information)
- Receipt of a major quest (major quests must be group awards)
- Access to magic items from a source other than the *Player's Handbook* (should be used rarely)

ADVENTURE QUESTIONS (OPTIONAL)

At the end of your adventure, you may have a number of multiple-choice questions relating to the

play of the adventure listed. The DM will fill out the appropriate answers on the tracking form and it will be entered in the adventure report. Your writing director may ask you to have certain questions and answer choices available in your adventure, or they may let you create your own. They are useful to track campaign consequences so the actions of groups playing the adventure can be taken into account for further adventure development.

Adventure questions are optional, but if you choose to have them, you cannot have more than 6. You must have at least two answer choices for each question, and no more than five. Adventure questions are only for campaign consequences and have no bearing on any other rewards earned during the play of the adventure.