



Limitless  
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# Reference Guide

Into the Crucible



## GAMEPLAY

*Into the Crucible*, and other Tides of Battle™ games are 5th Edition DMless games intended for solo play. You don't read this book like a novel, instead reading only what the book allows. The game uses 5th Edition rules, which you should be familiar with. This book is intended for a 5th Edition character of 4th Level, you may create your own, level up a character from a previous Tides of Battle™ game, or use a pregenerated character. If you create your own we suggest you use the SRD rules or Player's Handbook and up to one other supplementary book.

## DUET PLAY

Because the book is your Game Master, many readers like to play duet style. One person can read the book and act as the Game Master, while the other plays. The reader may alter things as they see fit to make the game more enjoyable. Be flexible. After one player has made it through the story, switch roles and let the other player try.

## ACTIONS, SKILLS, AND THE JOURNAL

**Actions:** Each encounter begins with a description in italic text, followed by a list of actions you may take. Some actions list a **Difficulty Class (DC)**, the difficulty to achieve that action. Some actions have no DC ( DC -- ) and do not require a roll. Some actions require tools, items, or information you find along the way. You may attempt any skill even if not proficient, but items, tools, or information (notes) must be in your inventory. Make your choice and then note it in the **Journal**. Unless it says otherwise, you may only use that skill/attribute once in a given area.

**Journal:** Each encounter or area has a journal section, where you may indicate your choice and roll a d20. Actions that are NOT combat, write down the number and any applicable modifiers. Ex: If you are using investigation skill, and are proficient, you would add your Intelligence modifier and your Proficiency Bonus (+2 for 4th level, +3 when you level up to 5th level) to this number.

**Additional d20 Boxes:** Sometimes you may see multiple boxes, and will make multiple d20 rolls. Roll as instructed and note them in the journal without any additional modifiers. These boxes may be used on the next page for more complicated scenes.

**Combat:** If you chose, or were forced to **Begin Combat**, see below for general references on how combat works in this book.

**"Requires":** Some choices have a "requires" option which may be an item of

inventory, specific skills, or even certain story milestones. If you use these options, you may be required to expend resources from your inventory. If you bribe a guard, you lose that gold. Some items are single-use only. Some options in challenges may only be accessed if you have a certain item in your inventory (ex: You can open the blue door if you have the blue key.) If you do not have the item in your inventory, you may not choose that option.

**Success/Failure:** If you meet or exceed the **DC** of a skill challenge or combat, follow the instructions in the **Success** box for that choice. If you fail a skill challenge or combat, follow the instructions in the **Failure** box.

## TIDES OF BATTLE™

Unless otherwise instructed in the **Success** or **Failure** sections, this section at the end of each chapter will provide you with other areas and locations you may explore next. If no instructions send you to another page in the book, you may flip back and try something else. So if you can't get a door open, you can try crawling into a window, or smashing the lock.

**Exploration:** If you enjoy exploration, and nothing of interest happens when you attempt a roll, try exploring other areas and come back before you try a different option.

## RECOVERY

Occasionally, you might run across a safe space on the battlefield. If your hitpoints are reduced to **zero** during combat, return to a **Recovery** area and recover one hit die worth of hitpoints + your Constitution modifier. If you have not discovered a **Recovery** area, and you have failed your death saves, your character has died. For a more challenging and deadly game, only allow use of each **Recovery** area once. There are items that might provide this capability.

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# BEGIN COMBAT

## FULL COMBAT EXPERIENCE

*Into the Crucible* introduces a new kind of combat system for solo play based on Intent, States, and Conditions. Enemies react to your actions and intent, and they change their own motivations based on what is happening on the battlefield. This chapter is a refresher for players who might need a quick rules reference. Make sure you know your character's abilities.

## THE BATTLEFIELD

On the combat page, you will find an outline of the battlefield, which may show terrain features, cover, and the position of you and the enemies. Some battles might happen in very close quarters, and may not have this. Remember, this is just a general guide for the start of the encounter. You may need to track your encounter on a piece of paper or in a drawing tool.

## ROLL FOR INITIATIVE!

Every battle begins with a roll for initiative. Roll a d20 and add your dexterity modifier. Some feats and abilities change this, and some class powers may depend on you winning initiative to take effect (the 5E assassin rogue has a power based on going first). The battle will give you a number to meet or beat. If you win, jump to **Player Turn** for the first round, otherwise the enemy goes first. Alternate after that. For "Old School" play, roll initiative each round after both sides are done.

## PLAYER TURN

On your turn, go to the **Player Turn** section. Look over your character sheet, the battlefield, and think about what you want to do. You may take any action available to your character, provided you have the resources (spell slots, etc). Remember, enemy units will respond to what you are doing. On the next page are various player Intents, some actions may cause enemy units to trigger certain behaviors. If you focus ranged attacks on a wizard enemy, the guard units might provide cover for them. Some attacks may have multiple intents, spells that may damage and move an opponent for example. You don't need to memorize the list, they're just there for reference.

**House Rules:** If you're used to certain house rules like flanking for advantage, or drinking potions as a bonus action, feel free to use those rules. Just remember the enemies also get to benefit from those rules.

## Player Intent Categories

**Focused Attack:** Target a single enemy. Roll attack vs AC, deal damage.

**Area Attack:** Target multiple enemies (Fireball, Thunderwave, cleave). Roll damage for all in area.

**Tactical Actions:** Control, buff, or debuff. (Silence, Hold Person, Bless, grapple, shove, pulling enemies)

**Defensive/Positioning:** Move, Dodge, Hide, Disengage, Dash.

**Support/Recovery:** Heal yourself or ally, use consumable (potion, scroll).

**Skill/Interaction:** Environment interaction, skill checks, social (Intimidate, Persuade).

**Summoning/Companion:** Summon creatures or command companion/pet.

## Allies/Summons

The story may give you some support/allies. These characters are not as experienced or as powerful as you. They may help up close, or fire upon enemies. You must use a bonus action to command them. Remember they do not have very many hit points, and they can die. Your character may also have the ability to summon creatures/familiars/pets. All allies go on your turn, and must be commanded to act by using your Bonus Action if not specified in the rules for the spell/ability. Allies will continue to perform their actions (archers will continue to fire arrows at a target) until told otherwise.

### Taking your turn

#### Each turn:

- Mark the Round Tracker.** Some story elements may be time sensitive.
  - Move (up to your speed) You can split movement around your action.
  - Action
  - Bonus Action (if you have one).
  - Mark off Spell Effect timers (spells with X number of rounds)
  - Mark off "On next turn" effects on self/enemies
- 
- Reaction ability may trigger in response to enemy actions

Once complete, proceed to the **Enemy Turn** section of the encounter.

## JOURNALING

You may want to journal your choices and outcomes, as it will help you remember where you are if you are interrupted or put the book down.

# ENEMY TURN

We've condensed a stat block down to its core features and abilities, as you'll see in the example below. Each enemy has a starting intent, which is listed at the top of the stat block. The desecrated dead below aren't very subtle, they just attack in an Aggressive state.

In the triggers section, though, you'll see that using a special talisman or killing one of the desecrated dead can trigger a different behavior. After taking your turn, check the triggers and update enemy Intents. When the enemies take their turn, use the recorded Intent to guide their actions. The interaction of triggers and the creature's state provides a rich combat experience without requiring the player to make decisions for the enemies.

## Example Enemy

### 3 X Desecrated Dead (13 HP) AC 13 ; Start: **Aggressive**

Saves: Str +2, **Dex +4**, Con +2, Int -2, Wis -1, Cha -3 | Move: 30 ft. | Immune: Poison, Poisoned condition

#1	HP	/ 13	Intent	_____	Cond.	_____
#2	HP	/ 13	Intent	_____	Cond.	_____
#3	HP	/ 13	Intent	_____	Cond.	_____

**Aggressive:** Move to melee. Shortsword +4, 1d6+2 piercing.

**Raise Dead Ally:** As an action, a Desecrated Dead may raise another Desecrated Dead that has been killed within three rounds to 1 hp. It will then return to being Aggressive.

**Fleeing:** Move at full speed directly away from attacker. Can repeat Wis save DC [your DC] at end of each turn, return to Aggressive on success.

#### TRIGGERS:

Check after Player Turn. Update intent/condition slots, return to Enemy Turn.

*Desecrated Dead:*

Desecrated Dead killed within 30 ft.: **Raise Dead Ally**.

**holy talisman** used: Within 30' makes Wis save DC 13, or **Fleeing** (requires **Old Priest's Holy Talisman**).

Some Intents might not show on a stat-block, notice the talisman mentioned has an effect like *turn undead* but *turn undead* isn't listed. Standard abilities and effects can apply without them being listed. Cowardly enemies may flee, restrained enemies will attempt to escape or attack their captors, etc. If you're unsure about the next state of the enemy, return to the "Start" intent, or choose an aggressive/attacking Intent.

# INTENT/TRIGGER QUICK REFERENCE

## Common Intents/Triggers

**Aggressive:** Move to melee, attack nearest enemy, pursue if they retreat.

**Casting:** Maintain distance, prioritize spells, escape melee if engaged.

**Defensive:** Hold position or retreat, use cover, fight cautiously.

**Knock Down:** Attack to knock target prone (save on hit). Goal is prone, not damage. Flanking ally then attacks prone target at advantage.

**Opportunistic:** Attack the most vulnerable target: paralyzed/restrained first, then lowest HP, then isolated. Reverts to Aggressive if no vulnerable target.

**Protecting (X):** Stay near X, intercept attacks on X, attack threats to X.

**Ranged Attacks:** Maintain distance, use ranged attacks, retreat if approached.

**Surround Opponent:** Move to flank or take advantage of Pack Tactics.

## Special Intents/Triggers

**Berserk/Rage:** Advantage on attacks, grant advantage to enemies, ignore damage until dead.

**Desperate:** Advantage on attacks, attacks against them have advantage, won't retreat.

**Fleeing:** Dash away each turn, exit encounter if possible.

**Recharged Power:** Signature ability is ready, use it now. Target the most enemies or highest threat. Mark recharge box after use.

**Retreating:** Fighting withdrawal, attack while moving back one position per turn.

**Take (X):** Move toward X, grab it, then become Fleeing.

## Condition Triggers

**Prone:** Uses half movement to stand.

**Restrained/Grappled:** Cannot move. Intent becomes attacking or escaping.

**Frightened:** Cannot move closer to you. If in melee, switches to Retreating.

**Stunned/Paralyzed:** Skips turn entirely.

**Blinded:** Executes intent at disadvantage on all attacks.

**Silenced:** Casters cannot use spells with verbal components; switch to melee, move to an area with the effect, or use non-verbal abilities.

**Poisoned:** Executes intent at disadvantage on attacks and ability checks.

## Morale/Health Triggers

**Fanatical (Undead, Constructs, Berserkers, Zealots):** Skip all morale checks

**Last Enemy Alive:** Becomes Desperate

**Leader Defeated:** All minions make Morale check

**≤50% HP (non-fanatical):** Morale check: Wis save DC 10 or Fleeing

**≤25% HP (non-fanatical):** Becomes Desperate (overrides Fleeing, cornered animals fight back)

**Player Paralyzed/Stunned/Restrained:** Opportunistic enemies switch to attack player

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