

DM AID

SURPRISE

With the 3rd Edition¹, a "Spot Check" is used to determine who is or is not Surprised. Not surprised characters get a special initiative at the top of the surprising melee round and may defend. Surprised characters get no extra action or dexterity defense if they are being hit in the initial "14th" segment. (See MOVEMENT) Surprised Spot Checks are used for the chance to be surprised or not by an encounter or event; Some characters or creatures or items with consciousness may be surprised, or not surprised.

Rather than a fixed ability to be surprised (our old rule) the 3rd Edition deals with surprise well. 3rd Edition needs, however, to be adapted to our house rule of 10 second Melee Rounds and 1 second Segments;

The DM must determine how surprising the event is. Each character has a SPOT CHECK modified by wisdom and any additional ability modifiers trained to help spot checks. If a character makes the modified spot check, they are not surprised to have an event occur (ambush, trap, etc.)

When a SURPRISE EVENT OCCURS:

- The party is asked to roll a modified SPOT CHECK (d20)
- The DM takes roll and notes who met the secret threshold for success (NOT SURPRISED)
- Those who are surprised may be asked to leave the room, or play goes into silent passing-notes with the not surprised players, or surprised characters may be told they are surprised and helpless
- The DM announces the Surprise Event (open ly or only to those Not)
- The DM calls for the NOT SURPRISED to roll initiatives
- The DM Rolls initiative for not surprised NPCs or characters*
- The NOT SURPRISED players and NPC's count down an action-only / no=movement instantaneous & simultaneous "14th" segment of actions or attacks. Surprised characters are subject to attack with no defensive modification; as if held - only protected by their passive armor...

After this virtual "14th" segment is acted out, everyone rolls a new initiative to count down the full 10 second melee round as usual... with no further hindrance to the Surprised.

* NPC's running head on into a party may also be surprised, so the DM may need to play out this same process for the NPCs or characters...

Some Surprises may be so subtle that there is no indication other than a character dropping out of the back of a party. The source or Surprise Event may recur as often as there are still clueless PCs; If the Not Surprised do not call out the event to alert the party, there may be no reason to roll initiative and a recurring surprise may take place.

Surprise Back Stab: Thieves and assassins get bonus damage for SURPRISE back stabs; This system applies to establish if the victim is surprised or not...

¹ 3rd Edition Players Handbook pg 120