Mythmaker's Improved Initiative

Streamlined Variant Rules for D&D 5e

Improved Initiative

Many brewers and DMs have attempted to improve or completely overhaul 5e's initiative system. While the system has its strengths, there are some core weaknesses as well.

These changes aim to address two of those major weaknesses: the one-dimensional nature of the initiative modifier, and the inability to efficiently coordinated player actions.

Ideally, these changes are highly streamlined and add very little complexity to actual play.

Initiative Modifier

Your initiative modifier is no longer tied to one attribute (Dexterity), but instead to three (Dexterity, Wisdom, Intelligence). Compare each of the three attributes to the table below, adding together the bonus for each attribute to find your initiative modifier.

Attribute Score	Bonus
13+	+1
15+	+2
17+	+3

The same rule applies to the initiative modifier of NPCs and monsters to keep encounters balanced, although a DM can always overrule the bonus for an enemy to any value they see fit on a case by case basis.

Rolling initiative is still considered an ability check, counting as either a Dexterity, Wisdom, or Intelligence ability check (your choice).

Creator's Notes - Why?

This rule makes Dexterity less of a super stat and adds focus to Wisdom and Intelligence. It also rewards odd numbered ability scores, so that min-maxing to even numbered scores isn't the only way to go.

Thematically, Wisdom includes how sharp your senses are to quickly gain a picture of the events around you, while Intelligence measures how quickly you can make sense of an ensuing battle amidst the chaos and formulate a plan of action. Both also contribute towards a character keeping its composure, while a low wis/int character might panic or hesitate, even if it is physically quick and dexterous.

In terms of simplicity, you only need to calculate your initiative mod when you create your character or when your attributes change, so it's no more complicated during play than the existing rules.

Turn Order Options

Use these two simple additions to the rules for turn order to allow players to better coordinate their actions without needing to completely overhaul how turn order works in 5e.

Delay

At the start of a character's turn, it can choose to delay the rest of its turn, reducing its initiative by any amount. The delay lasts for the remainder of combat. Start of turn effects occur before this delay takes effect. A creature can not delay if it is incapacitated.

Coordinated Turns

Two or more friendly creatures who would act on the same count in initiative can choose to take their turns as a coordinated turn. During a coordinated turn, a participating creature can interject a part of its turn into the turn of another participating creature at any time, allowing creatures to mix and match the order of their actions, movement, and more.

During a coordinated turn, start of turn and end of turn effects still occur at their normal times. When a coordinated turn begins, participating creatures choose what order their start and end of turn effects resolve.

Example

Tim the Bard and Velda the Paladin are fighting a few orcs. Tim rolls a higher initiative, but chooses to delay so he can coordinate his turn with Velda. On their coordinated turn, first, Tim moves towards Velda, then uses his bonus action to give Bardic Inspiration to Velda. Then, Velda moves towards an enemy and takes the Attack action against it. After the attacks are resolved, Tim uses his action to cast Sleep on the creature, which now has low enough hit points to be affected thanks to Velda's attacks.

Special Thanks

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