

FOUR AGAINST DUNGEONS & DRAGONS

HOW TO CONVERT PUBLISHED D&D MODULES TO USE WITH FOUR AGAINST DARKNESS

A Guide by Harrison Marchant - The Gamebook Adventurer

FOUR AGAINST DUNGEONS & DRAGONS

Welcome weary travellers, please join me for a tankard of warm ale and a seat by the fire. In this supplement, I am going to guide you through the process of converting Dungeons & Dragons Adventure Modules for use with the Four Against Darkness rule set. While this will not be an easy task, with a bit of work it will give you everything you need to get your party of four started in the mystical and perilous worlds of Dungeons & Dragons.

WHAT IS FOUR AGAINST DARKNESS?

Four Against Darkness is a very old-school grid-based dungeon crawler for one player. You create a party of four adventurers with a very simple set of rules, kit them out with basic equipment and then throw them head first into the darkness (hence the name).

In the core rulebook, random tables are provided for you to roll upon and determine the size and shape of the rooms, another table to determine the contents such as Traps, Treasures, Enemies, NPCs and so on. In some of the newer 4AD supplements, pre-generated dungeons are provided for you to explore with your party much like published D&D Adventures.

A very simple but satisfying encounters system is used to fight off the evil that lurks within. Characters can level up and obtain new skills and abilities allowing you to use the same party across multiple adventures.

In many ways it feels like a rules-light/roleplaying-lite version of basic D&D

SO WHY NOT JUST PLAY D&D?

The simple answer for me is that it's really not that easy playing D&D on your own. I'm aware that there are lots of solo systems on the market that you can use, one of the most famous being the Mythic Game Master Emulator. Now while I think it's a fantastic system, it feels to me like much more of a creative writing exercise than a dungeon crawl.

I wanted something solitaire and simple, that did not require a large amount of book keeping, no over complicating dice mechanics or oracle question systems either. I'm not a fan of virtual tabletops or D&D video games and in all honesty, I would rather just play on my own.

That's where Four Against Darkness comes in.

WHAT DO I NEED TO START PLAYING?

You will need to grab yourself the following:

- The Four Against Darkness Rulebook. I would also recommend getting as many as the expansions and supplements as you can as they will come in handy.
- A D&D Adventure Module of your choice. There are many free adventures out there.
- A Pencil, Eraser and a Notebook.
- 2x Normal 6-Sided Dice. (d6) Although having some other Polyhedral Dice too could be useful.

A FEW THINGS TO NOTE...

- Sometimes I will use 4AD instead of Four Against Darkness just as I might use D&D instead of Dungeons & Dragons.
- During the course of this guide I will be referencing information found in the Four Against Darkness Gamebook.
- Wherever possible, I will add in the page numbers of the rulebook where the corresponding information can be located.
- There may be some mechanics that are introduced in newer 4AD modules. I will do my best to explain these but it is worth picking up all additional supplements.
- Due to copyright reasoning, I can't share any images or content directly from the rulebooks for both 4AD & D&D
- This is just a guide and is not a strict set of rules you MUST follow. You're the boss of your own game, pick and choose how you want to play, these are just some guidelines.

The most important thing is to have fun!

WHERE DO I BEGIN?

Flip over to the next page for the start of the guide. Good luck adventurer, I hope you and your party find fortune and glory!

THE GUIDELINES

STEP #1 - CREATE YOUR PARTY.

Just as you would in a normal game of Four Against Darkness, create a cracking band of 4 adventurers. Give them fitting names and kit them out using the Weapons, Armour and Items listed in the Rule book. Follow all of the same rules as if you were playing a standard game of 4AD.

For now, ignore anything you have heard about D&D character creation. There are an enormous number of extra skills, attributes, items and modifiers that D&D characters have to consider. Remember we are playing 4AD not D&D!

Now you have your party of four ready for action you can proceed onto step #2 below.

STEP #2 - SET THE TIME.

Sometimes D&D modules will tell you what time of the day to start the adventure, whether it's dawn or dusk, maybe even midnight. If it doesn't, make a best guess or just pick a time you think your party would get up ready to leave on their quest. You'll want to make a note of the time before every entry that you undertake.

In the 4AD Manual, it states that it takes 10 minutes for you to enter a room, resolve combat, search for treasure, activate any traps, converse with NPCs etc. so make sure you update your current time before each numbered entry you wish to proceed with. I would also use the 10-minute rule when referencing any random wandering monster encounters too.

If the adventure references a long distance that needs to be travelled, most of the time it will say "its half a day's walk from here" etc. If it doesn't state a length of time, use your best judgement. Bear in mind that you may have a dwarf with stumpy legs, so you could say that it takes a little longer than normal to get to where you need to go.

THE SUNLESS CITADEL

07:00 Our Adventure Begins.

Here is a really basic example of how you could start your adventure. The most important thing for you to remember during play is to **Keep A Note Of The Time!**

Now that you have a firm grasp of time management, proceed onto Step #3.

STEP #3 - KEEP ON READING.

Open up your chosen Adventure Module and read away. Don't be worried about reading passages that the book tells you is for the Dungeon Master's eyes only. More often than not you will start in a tavern or town somewhere learning about rumours of a dungeon, missing person or a haunted keep etc.

Its fine to read all of this info, even if it mentions you need to roll for a persuasion check or an investigation/intuition check just ignore them. Treat all of this information as rumours and make note of anything that sounds important.

You and your party are in town and you've been told all of this info by the locals over some ale and it could be true, or it could all be rubbish. It doesn't matter as it's all just more content we are going to use to flesh out the story.

Read it all, right up until the point where the adventure actually begins (It will tell you when).

Now move on to Step #4.

STEP #4 - START A QUEST LOG.

Start picking out the rumours you have just read and sort them all out into a simple quest list that you can refer to when you are in the dungeon. It could be that someone has lost an old sword in there and they are hoping that you may come across it. Maybe a villager has noticed some strange goings on around a certain area or landmark that you might want to investigate.

It should look something like this:

QUEST LOG.

- Investigate the Sunless Citadel.
- Recover 2 missing Gold Rings (125gp each)
- Find the villages missing Saplings
- Recover a lost magical sword "Shatterspike"
- Search for Talgen & Sharwyn

Make a note of any rewards for these tasks too if they state that in the book. This quest log will change throughout the adventure; you may even come across NPC's in the dungeon that can offer you tasks so make sure you leave some room for changes.

It's always a good idea to use a separate sheet from the character sheet to record these on just to save any confusion later on.

Now you have a party of four, fully kitted out with, and now they know everything about the journey ahead. Proceed to Step #5

STEP #5 - DECIDE A MARCHING ORDER.

As soon as the adventure is about to begin, it's a good idea to get your characters in a good marching order. Bear in mind you can change this between encounters, but you need to be ready for that first encounter (whatever it may be?).

Here's an example of my Party' Marching Order:

1. Barbarian
2. Rogue
3. Cleric
4. Dwarf

Once you have decided, keep reading the Adventure Module until you reach the numbered entries section which is normally accompanied by a map of the area/dungeon. Proceed to Step #6

STEP #6 - START READING THE NUMBERED ENTRIES IN THE BOOK.

Nearly every D&D adventure I have seen comes with a map and some numbered entries that inform the reader of what's in the room/area and what actions are available for the players to take.

There is the map that the party will be using for the first part of the adventure, don't worry about what you can see on here, try not to focus too much on what's coming up in the future, just focus on the number you are on and read its description

In the Sunless Citadel, entry #1 tells us about the "Ledge"

Unfortunately, I can't tell you word for word what it says, but a basic overview tells us to have a look at the provided map, then it gives us a little description about what the party can see around the ledge of this old ravine. It tells us that there appears to be a lot of signs that rats inhabit this area, rats that are a whole lot bigger than we're used to.

It then goes on to tell us about the first encounter in this adventure.

STEP #7 - COMBAT ENCOUNTERS.

So we have just been informed that our first encounter is imminent. 3 Giant Rats are hiding among the rubble and will pounce on the first character in the party when they arrive.

Here's where things take a much simpler turn that you might think. We first need to establish what type of encounter this is and what type of creature we are encountering. If you'd played 4AD previously you'd know that rats are part of the Vermin family of creatures.

What we then need to do is look up the rats on the vermin table in the 4AD rulebook found on page 35 of the rulebook.

VERMIN TABLE (D6).

3d6 rats Level 1, no treasure.

Any character wounded has a 1 in 6 chance of losing 1 additional life due to an infected wound.

Reactions (d6): 1-3 flee, 4-6 fight

Even in D&D rats aren't considered a mighty foe so it's perfectly acceptable to substitute the 3x D&D Giant Rats for 3 Level 1 4AD Rats. If you are looking for more of a challenge, try using 3d6 to roll for one Giant Rat, the total would be his total life rather than the number of normal rats present, make 3 copies of him on your encounter sheet and go from there. They are still Level 1 Rats just with a bit more life to increase the difficulty.

I would also look at the encounter description for context about who gets to attack first.

In my example the rats are ready to pounce on the first party member to enter the area. That would be the #1 in the marching order, meaning my Barbarian will take 3 attacks before the rest of the party join in and it becomes a normal round of combat. If we had entered a room and the rats were just in there, then we would start it as a standard combat encounter like so:

THE SUNLESS CITADEL

07:00 Our Adventure Begins.

07:10 Entry #1 Ledge
Encounter - 3x Giant Rats Lvl 1 □□□

If the guide doesn't tell you who has "advantage" then just assume it's a standard encounter and we go first.

Use the standard combat rules as described in the Four Against Darkness Rulebook. Remember Monsters roll no dice!

Now these Giant Rats have no treasure according to 4AD and in the D&D adventure book, it doesn't tell us about there being any treasure drops from these enemies so we would proceed as normal onto the next area. Also make note of the extra wound damage modifier, make sure you make full use of any extra effects that are listed under a creature type.

THE SUNLESS CITADEL

07:00 Our Adventure Begins.

07:10 Entry #1 Ledge
Encounter - 3x Giant Rats Lvl 1 ■■■■

07:20 Entry #2 Switchback Stairs

Once combat is resolved, make sure you make a note of the time then proceed onto the next numbered entry that's available to you. Check the map to see where you can go next. At this moment in my example and due to my party's location, the only possible options they have are to move onto entry #2 or go back to the entrance.

STEP #8 - KEEP EXPLORING.

So far, my party have already taken on their first encounter in a D&D adventure and its not been any different to a normal 4AD encounter. That's the beauty of this system. It's similar enough that you can work out what you should be doing using the 4AD rules without much effort.

As the party move on to entry #2, it's just an empty area with a description of the ruins they are about to enter.

Now is this area actually empty? That's up to you to decide. You could roll upon the Room search table in the 4AD manual if you wish? This can be found on page #53.

My only change to this rule would be that if you roll a 5-6 and decide to take a secret door as the reward, it isn't going to be much use to the party using the door to go into a room that doesn't exist in the pre-gen adventure. I would suggest that you always assume that a secret door on a room search roll can lead you straight out of the dungeon in an emergency.

Any other roll you make on the table that ends up being a wandering monster or treasure, then feel free to use them and roll on the respective tables.

On a side note, the example adventure I am using has a table for wandering monsters, so if you like you could roll on this table and then find the closest creature in the 4AD gamebook for its statistics, life, attacks etc.

Unfortunately for my party rolled up some rats again on this empty room search. No treasure for them, so they slay the Giant Rats and move on to the next numbered entry according to the map.

THE SUNLESS CITADEL

07:00 Our Adventure Begins.

07:10 Entry #1 Ledge
Encounter - 3x Giant Rats Lvl 1 ■■■

07:20 Entry #2 Switchback Stairs
Encounter - 5x Giant Rats Lvl 1 ■■■■■

07:30 Entry #3 Crumbled Courtyard

Something else worth noting is that the D&D adventure will probably be a lot tougher than a standard 4AD adventure, so you have a choice when you come across an empty room in the adventure guide. You could roll on the standard room contents table and risk fighting a boss midway through the quest. I would highly suggest just sticking to the empty room search. If the adventure module says its empty, I would treat it as empty!

Again take note of how much time has passed! 20 minutes in and they've already killed a bunch of Giant Rats.

This is how the game will continue on from here.

STEP #9 - DEALING WITH TRAPS, LOCKED DOORS & SECRET DOORS

In my example adventure, the party reach entry #3. They are in good shape only taking a few very minor wounds from some rats along the way when they come across their first trap.

In 4AD you roll to determine if a trap is in a room or not, I believe in this instance, when we can clearly see a Trap icon on the map we are using from the D&D book, we have to assume the party is not aware.

I like the rule from the 4AD manual that if a Rogue is leading the party and enters a room with a trap, he or she gets an attempt to disarm the trap and warn the rest of the party about it. As you already know what's coming up I feel like a much fairer rule would be to allow you to roll at an attempt to discover and disarm the trap as long as you have a Rogue in your party! so no matter their position in the marching order, they can still call out to the guys ahead and say "don't step on that!!"

Now we still want there to be an element of surprise here, roll for the detection and if you fail use the 4AD traps table to pick the closest trap to the one in the adventure module. Make any saving or defensive throws that you are allowed to and see what outcome occurs.

THE SUNLESS CITADEL

07:00 Our Adventure Begins.

07:10 Entry #1 Ledge
Encounter - 3x Giant Rats Lvl 1 ■■■

07:20 Entry #2 Switchback Stairs
Encounter - 5x Giant Rats Lvl 1 ■■■■■

07:30 Entry #3 Crumbled Courtyard
Trap Discovered - Lvl 4 Pit
Trap Disarmed!

07:30 Entry #4 Tower Shell

I changed my mind on the marching order rule as I thought players would just change the marching order anyway if they could clearly see a trap on the map coming up.

I also keep the optional rule for locked doors from the 4AD manual. Ignore the first roll to determine if the door is locked or not, the adventure guide will tell you when a door is locked or trapped. Roll a d6 to determine the locked doors level and then decide how to proceed. If a Rogue is present in the party, they can take one roll to try and pick the lock, they need to match or beat the door level roll. failing that you can bash down the door using a strength character or a magical spell if you have one. The guidelines for this are on page #60 of the 4AD rulebook.

Bear in mind that if you destroy the door, you will not be able to close it again which will come in handy in the next section.

Secret doors are a bit trickier, sometimes on the D&D map a secret door will be visible with a little "S" icon to show you its indeed a secret. For now, I am using the idea that the party can roll as if it were an empty room search to detect the door, meaning a 5-6 needs to be rolled in order to discover the door and proceed. This is under the impression that you have already cleared the room from monsters and traps.

If the secret door is trapped, then treat that as a standard trap roll too. If you roll a 1 or 2-4 then it's up to you if you want to roll for the respective tables. It could be a pain if you keep getting caught by wandering monsters.

A successful Secret Door check may look like this:

THE SUNLESS CITADEL

07:00 Our Adventure Begins.

07:10 Entry #1 Ledge

Encounter - 3x Giant Rats Lvl 1 ■■■

07:20 Entry #2 Switchback Stairs

Encounter - 5x Giant Rats Lvl 1 ■■■■■

07:30 Entry #3 Crumbled Courtyard

Trap Discovered - Lvl 4 Pit
Trap Disarmed!

07:40 Entry #4 Tower Shell

Secret Door Discovered - Trapped!
Trap Discovered - Lvl 1 Needle Trap
Trap Activated!

07:50 Entry #5 Secret Pocket

STEP #10 - A WELL EARNED REST.

Resting is a big part of recovery in D&D and it's something that has been mentioned in the Fiendish Foes supplement for 4AD. I suggest picking up a copy as it does have a load of new monster tables that would be really useful when converting D&D encounters!

According to the rule for resting in Fiendish Foes, you can rest in an empty or cleared room that has doors you can close. There's an optional rule that you can buy a bag of nails at the beginning of the adventure to allow you to barricade up the room. While resting you regain spells and lost life points but you do have to roll to see if wandering monsters discover you while you are sleeping. If they do, you still get your life refilled and your spells back but you do have to fight.

If you used the nails to secure the room, you get to attack first as you obviously heard them breaking in and were able to get ready, if you do not barricade the doors then they get a surprise attack on you and strike first!!

If you destroyed the doors to the room you are in then you cannot rest there and will have to carry on or backtrack to an earlier room, and obviously risking more wandering monsters on the way. Something else to bear in mind is that you must have cleared out any connecting rooms too. You can't rest easy not knowing what's on the other side of that door.

STEP #11 - THE ART OF SNEAKING

On occasion in D&D you may be able to sneak up on an enemy or group of enemies to gain "advantage". We generally ignore this rule in 4AD as you always get the first attack in a standard encounter, however if it's really required for the party to sneak at any point, I would suggest changing the marching order so that the Rogue is in #1 in the marching order and is instructing the others on how to be quiet and follow his lead.

That way an extra element of suspense is added as you're putting a weaker character in the lead position.

STEP #12 - ITEMS AND WEAPONS.

To be perfectly honest most items in D&D are similar to those in 4AD, weapons are weapons at the end of the day, and if you pick one up that's not listed in the 4AD book, compare it to something else that's close enough and use those stats.

If it's a magical weapon add the +1 ability that you get from a magical weapon in 4AD's magical item table. Bear in mind the weight restrictions of carrying too many weapons.

If there are any quest related or strange items you want to pick up like a stone tablet, or a sacred idol, add it to your inventory sheet and carry on. You may need it later on for a puzzle or a quest. Just be mindful that any items you gather that give you bonuses, you may need to find the closest item in the 4AD books and use those stats in order for it to not become too overpowered or too weak.

STEP #13 - CONVERTING ENEMIES

This was by far the hardest part of D&D to "convert" to work with 4AD and it's still not quite perfect. I think that personally, you want to be having fun when you play, not messing around doing complicated maths equations trying to find out if this particular enemy has converted correctly.

I like to use a really simple element of comparison. If for instance we came up against some "Twig Blights" in this adventure, I would look roughly at their stats, to make sure they are not listed as a boss/mini boss monster and then look at what's the closest creature in the 4AD books to use instead. On this occasion it would probably be Fungi Folk. Both creatures have similar attacks and poison abilities, both are simple minions that work in groups, and they're both types of creatures that come from a plant based background.

6x Twig Blights would look something like this:

07:50 Entry #5 Secret Pocket

Encounter - 6x Twig Blights Lvl 3

You could also decide to roll for enemy reactions, remember we are still playing Four Against Darkness here. The same conversion rules can be used for bosses too, luckily 4AD has loads of bosses, dragons and weird monsters we can use.

The more 4AD modules you own, the more creatures you can use for comparison.

That's the simple way to compare and adapt enemies. It could also be worthwhile doing some basic research into fantasy creatures as you'll find out that a lot of creatures are very similar to others.

Wyverns are similar to Drakes & Dragons

Ogres are very much like Trolls, who are similar Golems, and Golem's can be likened to Giants.

Zombies are like Undead, who are like Skeletons etc.

You get the idea.

Hopefully one day there will be a full Monster Manual created for 4AD and this part will be slightly easier to accomplish.

FINAL NOTES

The main bulk of converting a published D&D adventure is here. Unfortunately there will be some things that crop up during play that are not covered here. Dungeons & Dragons is a huge game with hundreds of different mechanics. The best thing you can do is compare the action/item/enemy/spell to something from the 4AD gamebooks and work from that.

Try and keep to as many of the 4AD house rules as you can as it's a great system, all of the sections do work really well together and if you feel like you want to change things up a little then use the random tables.

This guide has been tested on a few published D&D adventure modules and it works fantastically well, even some that weren't D&D such as "Adventures in Middle Earth" which is a cool D&D 5e based RPG set in The Lord of the Rings universe. I'm sure this system would work for any party based dungeon crawling game that has numbered entries, so get out there and try some, but most importantly:

Have Fun!