

RAPID RANDOM BATTLEFIELDS

Do you need to quickly sketch out an environment? Do you tend to lapse into drawing in the same kinds of arenas, or only two arenas? Here is a method for quick generation of a more interesting scene of battle.

Plan to make your field of battle about 9 arenas (3 arenas across, three arenas down), with the characters in the center arena. Assume surroundings default to open or neutral (unless they are somewhere like a rope bridge and you know that already. Then maybe focus on what's on either end, etc.)

Set a default: probably open or neutral. Then roll 3d6 to see what is nearby *that is of interest*.

1. Neutral.
2. Open.
3. Dense.
4. Tight.
5. Hazardous.
6. Inaccessible.

Note the three other types to include, and then quickly draw the battle field.

- Do not draw a grid with 9 squares, but instead keep that grid in mind as you add in arenas.
- They can be bigger or smaller, longer or wider, even curved or other shapes.
- If two or three arenas next to each other seem to be one piece, make them all one arena.
- Scale it in your mind. Arenas can be any size. In close quarters like alleyways or shops, maybe lots of little arenas; if they are riding horses out on the plains, big arenas!
- *This process is to inspire you, you are not accountable to it.*

Description adds excitement. Once you've got your arenas, tell them what is there, based on the surroundings. In the woods, a dense arena is probably underbrush. In a slum, a dense arena might be a crowd of people around a performer, or a clutch of street vendors. On the beach, it could be a stand of bamboo. Try to describe something fun to interact with.

Stay flexible. That dense arena that is a crowd could scatter, making the arenas around it neutral instead of open. Fighters could leap up on the roof of the market stalls, creating a hazardous arena. Traffic could jam, creating an impassible or hazardous arena. This is not only okay, it's a feature of the system; encourage it! Do it yourself sometimes! Remind them they are in a dynamic world. Reward creativity.

There are some special circumstances that come up often, so here is some advice.

- **Roads.** Make them narrow (but include the shoulder) and 2 or 3 arenas long for the purposes of the encounter. They are open unless there is traffic, then they can be any arena type!
- **Walls.** If they can go over it or fight on it make it hazardous. If the walls hem them in, make it tight. If the walls mean they can't go that way, make it impassible. Remember that interacting with the scenery is more fun than being limited by it. If they want to break a wall, or your monster does, let it happen (deciding how much damage the wall can take) and decide whether the rubble-strewn hole area is dense, tight, or hazardous!
- **Weather.** Rain, mud, snow and ice are great for shifting terrain to hazardous!
- **Woods.** Brush and saplings are likely to be dense, stands of trees close together or with low branches tend to be tight, and old growth big forests with space between trunks may be neutral.