Combat Manoeuvres

Dragon Warriors House Rules Reference

Not all combats are going to respond to the same tactics and a clever adventurer will modify his combat strategies depending on the foe he faces. Except where noted, each combat manoeuvre applies only to melee combat. If a character has multiple attacks in a single round, he is free to choose any combat manoeuvre for his first attack. However, the second (and any subsequent) attacks can only be normal attacks.

Intelligent opponents are also free to take advantage of all of these combat manoeuvres; unintelligent creatures are likely to just use the Normal Attack manoeuvre.

Characters not proficient in their weapon can only perform a Defensive Manoeuvre, Normal Attack, or Aggressive Manoeuvre.

Defensive Manoeuvre

A character concentrates slightly more on defence than normal. In this case, the character gains a +1 bonus to his Defence for each full –3 penalty to Attack the character is prepared to take to his next attack action. Attack may not be reduced below 0 but may be reduced to 0. If the character chooses not to attack at all, they gain an additional +1 to Defence, but may still only split Defence between up to 3 attackers.

Normal Attack

This combat manoeuvre allows the character to make a single attack using their normal Attack and defend with their normal Defence. No special rules apply.

Aggressive Manoeuvre

A character may choose to make a more aggressive melee attack than normal at the expense of safety for a +1 bonus to Attack for every –3 penalty to Defence. Defence may not be reduced below 0 but may be reduced to 0.

Called Shots

Armour does not cover every square inch of the wearer's body – plate comes close, but armour generally stops at the knees, the elbows, and the neck. An attacker may take a penalty to Attack to target an unarmoured location. The Called Shot Penalty (CSP) to Attack depends on the armour worn by the target, as follows:

Armour	CSP
Padded Leather	-3
Hardened Leather	-3
Ringmail	-5
Chainmail	-5
Plate Armour	-7

A successful hit is treated as if it was a critical hit and automatically bypasses armour. This combat manoeuvre is equally applicable to melee and ranged combat.

Disarm

The Disarm manoeuvre may be attempted at range as well as in melee and is a special form of called shot that targets a weapon instead of an unarmoured location. The difficulty of doing this depends on the size of the weapon. A large or two-handed weapon (including bows and crossbows) may be targeted with only a –2 Attack penalty. A normal-sized weapon (for example, sword, short-sword, mace, et cetera) may be targeted at –4 to Attack. A small weapon (for example, dagger, sling, et cetera) may be targeted with a –6 penalty to Attack.

On a successful hit, the attacker rolls 2d10 against the total of his strength and his weapon's damage, reduced by the damage value of the opponent's weapon. Damage values are adjusted for high or low Strength and magical bonuses.

> 2d10 ≤ Attacker's weapon damage + attacker's Strength – defender's weapon damage = **DISARMED**

If the disarm attempt is made with a bow not tailored to the character's Strength, use the lower of the character's Strength or the bow's Strength (assume a normal bow has a Strength of 11). Crossbows have an effective Strength of 15.

Example

Brother Caedmon is supporting his friends with his bow, tailored to his Strength of 12. His friends are fighting some goblins when he notices another goblin, apart from the main group and not engaged in melee, about to throw a dagger at Fergus. Caedmon, with a higher initiative than the goblin, declares that he wants to shoot the dagger out of the goblin's hands.

Caedmon's Attack is 14, he is at short range (0 modifier), and his target is a small weapon (-6 modifier), meaning he must roll 8 or less on 2d10 to hit the goblin's weapon. He rolls a 7, hitting the dagger with his arrow.

A dagger normally does 3 damage and the goblin has neither an exceptionally high or low Strength to modify this. Caedmon's bow's Strength is effectively 12 (not 11, as he has a tailored bow) and his arrows also do 3 points of damage.

Caedmon calculates his chance to disarm the goblin:
3 (bow damage) + 12 (the bow's Strength) – 3 (dagger damage) = **12.**

Caedmon must roll 12 or less on 2d10 to flick the dagger out of the goblin's hand with his arrow. He rolls 18, merely a glancing hit. Face twisted into an evil smirk, the goblin hurls the knife at Fergus.

Distract

This manoeuvre consists of a sequence of feints designed to distract the target and makes them easier to hit. On a successful hit, all other attacks against that target receive a +4 bonus to hit until the target recovers (which they will do automatically during their next action). This manoeuvre is especially popular with familiars aiding their sorcerous masters in melee combat as few combatants think to assign Defence to a Sorcerer's familiar.

Press

This is a melee-only manoeuvre that does not harm his opponent but challenges their Defence with a flurry of blows against which they are forced to give ground.

On a successful hit roll, the defender is forced to move 5' directly away from the attacker and suffers a penalty to their next attack equal to the damage value of the attacker's weapon. The attacker *must* step forward 5' to keep with the defender. Other characters engaged with the opponent, though, will not be entitled to this free move and may become disengaged. Any character that disengages from their opponent because of the press manoeuvre does not suffer a retributive attack.

If the target of this manoeuvre cannot step back 5' (for example, because of a wall or other character behind them), they suffer a penalty to their next attack equal to the damage value of the weapon being used against them, plus 1.

If the defender is forced to step over loose terrain, small creatures or other trip hazards, off ledges, et cetera, the GM should require a Reflexes check to avoid that character tripping or falling.

Note that GMs may wish to apply bonuses or penalties to attempting this manoeuvre against opponents significantly smaller or larger than the attacker.

Shield Bash

The purpose of a shield bash is to strike an enemy with the face of a shield in an effort to knock them off balance, putting them at a disadvantage against a follow-up attack. Only a character currently wielding a shield and being proficient in its use can perform this manoeuvre.

During the combat round in which the shield bash is made, the attacker cannot use his shield to defend against incoming attacks.

The attacker must roll against his Attack unopposed by the target's Defence and, if successful, the target must roll under Reflexes on 2d10 or be at −3 Defence and −1 Evasion until immediately after their next attack action (or, in the event the character is slowed or otherwise prevented from taking their next action, whenever they would have taken their next attack action under normal circumstances).

Circumstantial Manoeuvres

Rules cannot hope to cater for all the environmental and circumstantial manoeuvres a character may wish to employ. Might a character see fit to engage a foe on stairs or a dangerously steep dungeon slope to gain the advantage of height? Is the character fighting on rubble strewn ground and hoping to trip his opponent or kick stones as he fights? Maybe an ally with a mirror is attempting to reflect the blinding rays of the low sun into the eyes of a combatant. Or perhaps the combatants are fighting each other across a low wall, providing some cover.

In short, the number of environmental hazards and conditions of which a canny combatant may wish to take advantage would be impossible to list and tedious to create a rigid rules system to govern. The GM should allow the players to be creative with their environment and be descriptive as they describe their character's combat manoeuvres. Remember that Dragon Warriors is a game of creativity, not endlessly rolling dice and combat should not consume the focus of the game – if players can contrive ways to use the environment to their advantage, they should be encouraged to do so, whether it fits within the rules or not.

In the examples provided above, some GMs may require combatants fighting on rubble-strewn ground to make a Reflexes check each turn during which they attack or move (unless moving cautiously) or fall over. Other GMs may simply apply a penalty to a character's Attack. Either way, the GM must be consistent when making rules and then enforce them for both heroes and NPCs. If reflecting sunlight into the eyes of an enemy by a hero with a mirror is made like any other ranged attack (with a suitable called shot penalty), then NPCs should be able to do the same to the heroes (or other NPCs) with the same chance of success.