

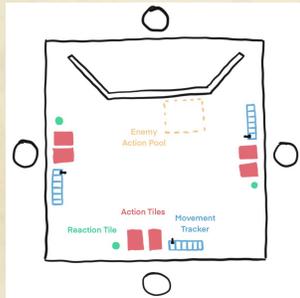
# DYNAMIC INITIATIVE

**D**YNAMIC INITIATIVE IS A SYSTEM DESIGNED TO replace the standard initiative system of Dungeons and Dragons, where players roll-off at the start of combat and then take turns in order until the encounter is complete. Dynamic Initiative allows combat to flow more freely between players and GMs, and encourages players to remain engaged throughout the combat encounter.

Created by [PolytopeParty](#) and [Band of Idiots](#).

## COMBAT SETUP

When the party enters a new combat encounter - when they would ordinarily roll an initiative check - each player instead places two **Action Tiles**, one **Reaction Tile**, and one **Movement Tracker** in front of them. A token is placed at the "0 feet" space of the movement tracker.



The GM designates a location as the **Enemy Action Pool**, such as a bowl or sectioned-off area of the play space. This will be where Action Tiles are placed when spent.

## ORDER OF PLAY

A **Combat Round** is made up of several **Cycles**, and each cycle is composed of a number of **Turns**. A turn is a period of time when a specific group of creatures can move and take actions. Under ordinary circumstances, there will be two turns per cycle: the players' turn (and their allies), and the enemies' turn (all together).



During the player characters' turn, each character may decide to move and/or take a number of actions (see [Actions](#) below). Once no more players wish to move or take actions, their turn ends and play passes to the enemies. Once both groups have taken a turn, a cycle is

complete and the player characters take a turn once more.

At the start of the player characters' turn, if they have no more unspent actions among them, the combat round completes and resets, allowing the players to take actions once more (see [Resetting the Combat Round](#) below)

## STARTING COMBAT

To begin, the GM rolls initiative once for all enemies and each player rolls initiative separately. The players always take the first turn, but may have fewer **Action Tiles** to spend based on how they roll, according to the table below.

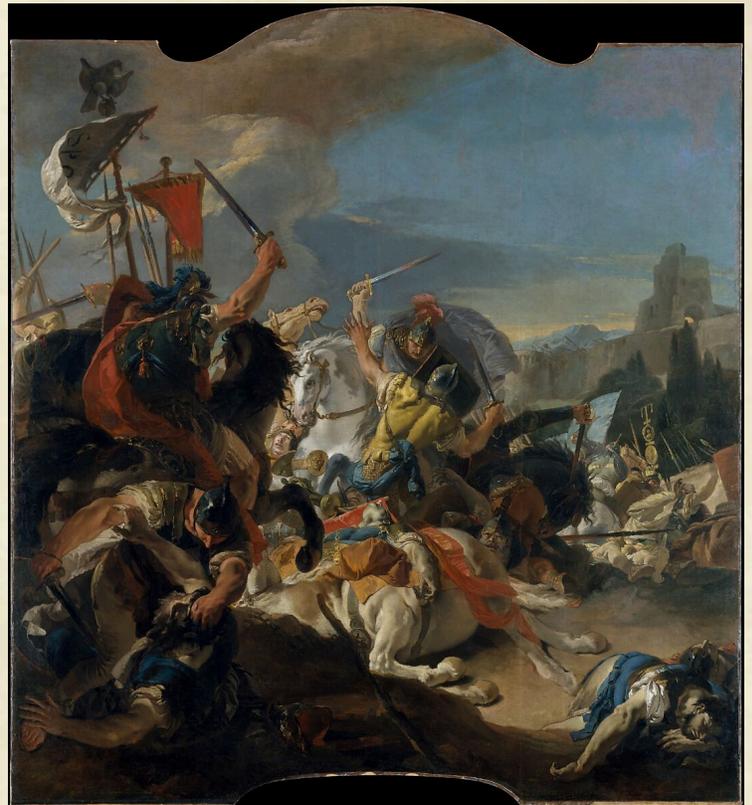
Any Action Tiles not given to a player as a result of their initiative roll are placed in the **Enemy Action Pool**.

These rules only affect the first round of combat, and all subsequent rounds operate as usual.

Roll vs Enemy	Player gains the following on Round 1
Player < Enemy 5+	0 Action Tiles, no reaction, half movement
Player < Enemy	0 Action Tiles
Player > Enemy	1 Action Tiles
Player > Enemy 5+	2 Action Tiles
Player > Enemy 10+	2 Action Tiles, +1 Fleeting Action Tile†

†the first round Fleeting Action Tile can only be used to take the Attack (one weapon attack only), Cast a Spell (cantrip only) Dash, Disengage, Hide, or Use an Object actions.

The GM may modulate this table based on situational factors such as *surprise*. For example, players surprising enemies may treat their roll on the table as one level higher, or enemies surprising the players may force the players' rolls to be one level lower.



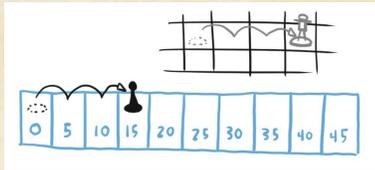
THE BATTLE OF VERCELLAE  
GIOVANNI BATTISTA TIEPOLO

## PLAYER TURNS

During a single combat round, a player character may spend up to two (2) Actions, up to one (1) Reaction, and move up to their speed in Movement. Actions and Movement may only be spent during the players' turn.

### PLAYER CHARACTER MOVEMENT

During the players' turn, any player may move their character up to their speed. Every time a character moves 5 feet or more, that player advances their movement tracker token along their **Movement Tracker** by the same amount. If a character's movement tracker token is on a space equal to their speed or greater, that character cannot move any further.



A player character may use the **Dash** action during their turn (see [Actions](#) below). Doing so resets their token to the "0 feet" space on

their movement tracker, allowing them to continue to move up to their speed once more (for the Rogues's Cunning Action and other bonus actions, see [Fleeting Actions](#) below).

## ACTIONS

During the players' turn, a player may choose to take one or more **Actions**. Actions that a character can take depend on that character's species, class, and features as normal - along with common actions such as Dash, Disengage, and Dodge.

When a character takes an action, that player must "spend" one of their **Action Tiles** by placing it in the **Enemy Action Pool** in front of the GM. If both of their Action Tiles are already spent, they may not take an action until one or both are returned to them (see [Resetting the Combat Round](#) below)

Some effects may cause an Action Tile to be turned 90 degrees (see [Fleeting Actions](#) below). If an Action Tile is turned 90 degrees, it is considered to be already spent and cannot be spent again to take another action.

### MULTIATTACK

If a player character has an ability which allows them to attack more than one time when they take the attack action, their first attack each round works as expected - spending an **Action Tile** and performing multiple attacks.

If the character wishes to spend their second Action Tile to attack again this round, they may only perform a single attack when they do so.

Note that this only applies to the second standard action taken during a single combat round. If a player character uses a special ability such as Action Surge, they may perform a multiattack as expected, spending an Action Tile to perform multiple attacks.

### HOLDING AN ACTION

A player character may take an action - spending an **Action Tile** and placing it in the **Enemy Action Pool** - to hold an action as described in the DnD standard rules.

The "held action" lasts until the start of a new combat round (see [Resetting the Combat Round](#) below) and may be activated if the trigger conditions are met at any point before then. The held action even lasts through multiple cycles, so a character who spent their first Action Tile to hold an action may spend their second Action tile to perform a different action.

Triggering a held action requires the character to flip their **Reaction Tile** as normal (see [Reactions](#) below). And if the trigger conditions are not met when the combat round resets, the action is lost.

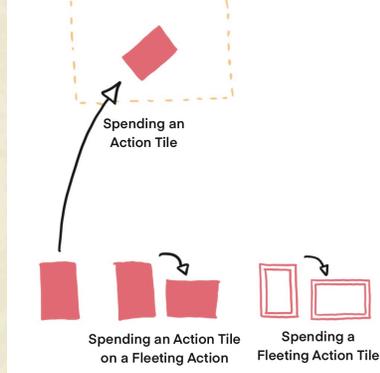


THE CAPTURE OF CARTHAGE  
GIOVANNI BATTISTA TIEPOLO

## FLEETING ACTIONS

Certain actions a player character can take are fast, opportunistic, or otherwise weaker relative to a normal action. These **Fleeting Actions** do not get sent to the **Enemy Action Pool**, and thus allow player characters to take them without action reciprocity from the enemies.

The use case for Fleeting Actions are bonus actions and any features that, under standard DnD rules, would add additional actions to the player's side. These actions are replaced with Fleeting Actions.



### Bonus Actions.

If a player character performs an action that would require a bonus action under standard DnD rules, that player rotates their **Action Tile** 90 degrees instead of sending it to the Enemy Action Pool. A rotated Action Tile cannot be spent again until the start of a new combat round.

**Summons and Allies.** If a player casts a spell or uses a feature which brings an additional creature into the combat, and that creature's action economy is divorced from the players (*for example: the player does not have to spend an action or bonus action "commanding" the creature, and it moves on its own initiative*), that creature receives its own **Fleeting Action Tile**. The tile must be rotated 90 degrees to perform its action, which can only be done once per combat round.

**Action Surge and Haste.** If a spell or ability allows a player to take extra actions for a period of time, that player is given a **Fleeting Action Tile** which lasts until the ability fades (*immediately for Action Surge, but for up to 1 minute for Haste*). The tile must be rotated 90 degrees to perform its action, which can only be done once per combat round.

## REACTIONS

Each player character may perform up to one reaction per combat round by flipping their **Reaction Tile** face-down. A creature regains a spent reaction at the start of a new combat round (see [Resetting the Combat Round](#) below).

## ENEMY TURNS

Once the players' turn is complete, play moves to the enemies. Enemy turns are slightly less restrictive than player turns, and the cost of being throttled by player tempo.

## ENEMY MOVEMENT

During the enemy's turn, each creature may move up to their speed. Unlike player movement - which resets each **round** - enemy movement resets each **cycle**, which allows each enemy to move up to their speed each turn.

However, an enemy that wishes to take the **Dash** action must spend 2 **Action Tiles** to do so (see [Enemy Actions](#) below)

## ENEMY ACTIONS

Enemy creatures take actions by spending **Action Tiles** from the **Enemy Action Pool**, which were supplied by the players on their turn. After spending an Action Tile, the GM sets that tile aside, where it cannot be used by the players or the enemies until the start of a new combat round (see [Resetting the Combat Round](#) below).

If the Enemy Action Pool has no Action Tiles remaining, the enemies' turn ends and play moves to the players' turn.

### STANDARD ACTIONS

The actions that a given creature can take is dependent on that creature's stat block.

- An enemy feature that would take an **action** under standard DnD rules costs 2 **Action Tiles** to complete.
- An enemy feature that would take a **bonus action** under standard DnD rules costs 1 **Action Tile** to complete.
- An enemy feature that takes 1 or more **legendary actions** under standard DnD rules costs the same number of **Action Tiles** to complete.
- An enemy can also take the **common actions**, such as Dash, Disengage, Dodge, and Hide. All common actions only take 1 **Action Tile** to complete except for Dash, which costs 2.

### MULTIATTACK

If an enemy creature has a **multiattack** action, they may choose to make a number of attacks - up to the maximum the multiattack allows - where each attack action only costs 1 **Action Tile**. Any attacks beyond the maximum cost 2 Action Tiles as normal.

This reduced cost can be applied each cycle, but only applies to the attacks that the multiattack normally includes. If a creature has any additional attacks, those attacks cost 2 Action Tiles as normal.

**Example:** a Troll stat block contains a multiattack action containing 3 Rend attacks. The first Rend attack costs 1 Action Tile, the second costs 1 (for a total of 2), and the third costs 1 (for a total of 3). For the 4th attack, the troll would have to spend 2 Action Tiles (for a total of 5).

**Example:** an Adult Red Dragon stat block contains a Fire Breath and a Spellcasting action, and a multiattack allowing them to make 3 Rend attacks. The first 3 rend attacks cost 1 Action Tile each. The Fire Breath and Spellcasting actions cost 2 action tiles as normal.

## SPELLCASTING

If an enemy creature has a **spellcasting** feature or is otherwise able to cast spells of 1st level or higher, that creature may only cast a maximum of one (1) leveled spell per combat round. This restriction does not apply to cantrips, nor does it apply to spells that the creature can cast without the use of spell slots (such as with the “innate spellcasting” feature).

## RECHARGE

If an enemy creature has a Recharge ability, the recharge roll is made at the start of each enemy turn, instead of at the start of each round.

## ENEMY REACTIONS

Each enemy creature may perform up to one reaction per combat round. A creature regains a spent reaction at the start of a new combat round (see [Resetting the Combat Round](#) below).

A creature with legendary actions may choose to perform one such action during the players’ turn. Doing so requires them to spend **Action Tiles** as normal, and also costs that creature their reaction.

## RESETTING THE COMBAT ROUND

The combat round resets at the start of the player characters’ turn if they have no **Action Tiles** remaining. When the combat round resets, the following effects take place.

**Action and Movement Reset.** All players regain all their **Action Tiles**. Tiles in the Enemy Action Pool are returned, any Action Tiles and Fleeting Action Tiles turned 90 degrees are rotated back. All players move their **Movement Tracker Token** to the “0 feet” space of their Movement Tracker.

**Reaction Reset.** All creatures flip their **Reaction Tile** to be face-up.

**Lair Actions.** If any creatures have any Lair Actions, they may take them at the start of a new combat round.

**Effect Reset.** Any spells, abilities, or effects which last until “the start of the round,” “the end of the round,” “the start of a creature’s turn,” or “the end of a creature’s turn” all last until the round’s reset. Any saving throws made to resist a spell or effect may be made at this time.

Note: this seriously messes with how certain spells and abilities actually play out, but I cannot think of a better way that isn’t needlessly complex.

**Death Saves.** if a player character is at or below 0 hit points and is not stabilized, that player must make a death save when the round resets.

## MISCELLANEOUS RULES

**The Slow Spell.** A slowed player character with at least one unspent **Action Tile** must immediately turn one of their Action Tiles 90 degrees. At the start of a new round, a slowed player character regains one fewer Action Tiles (*either returning from the Enemy Action Pool or rotating back a rotated Tile*). An enemy creature under the effect of Slow may still take actions, but each action costs 1 additional **Action Tile** to complete. All other aspects of the spell (except those already modified by this document) remain the same.

