

# ENCUMBRANCE BY STONE – OD&D

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[by Justin Alexander – March 23rd, 2011](#)

*This is a simplified method for handling encumbrance in OD&D and is designed to completely replace the existing encumbrance system. It's indebted to both [Delta's D&D Hotspot](#) and [Lamentations of the Flame Princess](#). I'll be posting full design notes in a few days.*

Encumbrance, measured in stones carried, determines how much a character's equipment slows them down, as shown on the table below:

<b>Encumbrance</b>	<b>Movement</b>
up to 5 stones	12"
up to 7 stones	9"
up to 10 stones	6"
up to 20 stones	3"

This can be conveniently thought of as the 5-10-20 rule (which corresponds to the maximum movement rates of 12", 6", and 3").

**Mounts and Mules:** Can carry three times as much, following a 15-30-60 rule. (The base movement for mounts and mules are given in *Volume 2*: 24" for a light horse; 18" for a medium horse; 12" for heavy horses, draft horses, and mules.)

To determine the number of stones carried by a character, simply consult the table below.

<b>Item</b>	<b>Weight in Stones</b>
Heavy Armor (Plate-type)	5 stones
Medium Armor (Chain-type)	3 stones
Light Armor (Leather-type)	1 stone
Shield	1 stone
Weapon	1 stone
Weapon, light	Misc. Equipment
Ammunition	Misc. Equipment
Miscellaneous Equipment	1 stone per 5 bundles
Stowed Weapons	1 bundle
Heavy Items	1 or more stones
Light Clothing / Worn Items	0 stones
150 coins or gems	1 stone
Weight of a Man	12 stones

**Miscellaneous Equipment:** Up to twenty items of the same type (scrolls, arrows, potions, rope) can be bundled together for the purposes of encumbrance. Items of different types aren't bundled when determining encumbrance.

**Stowed Weapons:** Stowed weapons have been compactly stored in a way which makes them more difficult to draw (but easier to carry). Stowed weapons must be retrieved before they can be used, but they only count as 1 stone per 5 weapons.

**Heavy Items:** Anything weighing more than roughly 10 pounds can't be effectively bundled. Estimate a weight in stones (about 10-20 pounds to the stone). When in doubt, call it a stone.

**Clothing / Worn Items:** Worn items don't count for encumbrance, unless the individual items would qualify as heavy items.

**Weight of a Man:** A human can generally be assumed to weigh about a dozen stones. Halflings weigh only 2 stones. (Your own weight does not count towards your encumbrance.)

## CONTAINERS

Weapons are assumed to be in sheaths, armor is worn, and you might have a wineskin or two strapped to your belt. But since there's a limit to how much you can hold in your hands, everything else you're carrying needs a place to live. As a rule of thumb, containers can carry:

<u>Container</u>	<u>Capacity</u>
Belt, Pouch	½ stone
Sack, Small	1 stone
Sack, Large	2 stones
Backpack	3 stones
Backpack, Large	5 stones

Empty containers count as miscellaneous equipment. Containers being used to carry items don't count towards encumbrance.

Larger sacks (often referred to as "loot sacks") are also possible, but these cannot generally be stored on the body. They must be carried in both hands.

# ENCUMBRANCE BY STONE – 3<sup>RD</sup> EDITION

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[by Justin Alexander – March 25<sup>th</sup>, 2011](#)

*This simplified method for handling encumbrance will be used in [Legends & Labyrinths](#), but it can also be easily dropped into any 3rd Edition game. (The rules for encumbrance by armor and the effects of encumbrance can be found in the core rulebooks.) The design is indebted to [Delta's D&D Hotspot](#) and [Lamentations of the Flame Princess](#). I'll be posting full design notes in a few days.*

Encumbrance, measured in stones carried, determines the load a character is currently carrying. Loads are either light, medium, or heavy and a character with Strength 10 follows an encumbrance rule of 10-5-3: At 3 stones they are carrying a medium load, at 5 stones they are carrying a heavy load, and their maximum load is 10 stones.

Characters with lower to higher Strength scores adjust this rule by 2-1-½ per point of Strength. Partial stones can be rounded up. The minimum possible rule, regardless of Strength score, is 2-1-½. (For example, a character with Strength 8 would have an encumbrance rule of 6-3-2. A character with Strength 18 would have an encumbrance rule of 26-13-7.) These adjustments are summarized for convenience on the table at the end of this post.

**Lifting and Pulling:** The character can lift and carry the amount indicated on the table above their head. They can lift twice this amount and stagger around with it (moving only 5 feet per round as a full action and losing their Dexterity bonus to AC). They can generally drag or pull five times this amount along the ground (favorable conditions can double this; bad circumstances can reduce the amount to one-half or less at the DM's discretion).

*Tremendous Strength:* For scores higher than 29, find the Strength score between 20 and 29 with the same final digit and multiply the listed lift score by 4 for every ten points the creature's strength is above that score. (For example, a creature with Strength 38 would be able to lift  $1,200 \times 4 = 4,800$  lbs.)

**Adjusting for Size:** The encumbrance rule for a creature is doubled for each size category above Medium and reduced by ½ for each size category below Medium (to a minimum of 1-½-¼). The encumbrance of armor, however, is also adjusted by the same factor (to a minimum of a half stone).

**Quadrupeds:** Quadrupeds can carry heavier loads, equal to 150% of a biped.



# WEIGHT BY STONE

To determine the number of stones carried by a character, simply consult the table below.

<u>Item</u>	<u>Weight in Stones</u>
Heavy Armor	5 stones
Medium Armor	3 stones
Light Armor	1 stone
Shield	1 stone
Weapon	1 stone
Weapon, light	Misc. Equipment
Ammunition	Misc. Equipment
Miscellaneous Equipment	1 stone per 5 bundles
Stowed Weapons	1 bundle
Heavy Items	1 or more stones
Light Clothing / Worn Items	0 stones
500 coins or gems	1 stone

**Miscellaneous Equipment:** Up to twenty items of the same type (scrolls, arrows, potions, rope) can be bundled together for the purposes of encumbrance. Items of different types aren't bundled when determining encumbrance.

**Stowed Weapons:** Stowed weapons have been compactly stored in a way which makes them more difficult to draw (but easier to carry). Stowed weapons must be retrieved before they can be used, but they only count as 1 stone per 5 weapons.

**Heavy Items:** Anything weighing more than roughly 10 pounds can't be effectively bundled. Estimate a weight in stones (about 10-20 pounds to the stone). When in doubt, call it a stone.

**Clothing / Worn Items:** Worn items don't count for encumbrance, unless the individual items would qualify as heavy items.

# CONTAINERS

Weapons are assumed to be in sheaths, armor is worn, and you might have a wineskin or two strapped to your belt. But since there's a limit to how much you can hold in your hands, everything else you're carrying needs a place to live. As a rule of thumb, containers can carry:

<u>Container</u>	<u>Capacity</u>
Belt, Pouch	½ stone
Sack, Small	1 stone
Sack, Large	2 stones
Backpack	3 stones
Backpack, Large	5 stones

Empty containers count as miscellaneous equipment. Containers being used to carry items don't count towards encumbrance.

Larger sacks (often referred to as "loot sacks") are also possible, but these cannot generally be stored on the body. They must be carried in both hands.

# CREATURE WEIGHT BY SIZE

Your own weight does not count against your encumbrance, but these figures are important for mounts. (They'll also come in handy if you need to carry a corpse or prisoner.)

<b>Creature Size</b>	<b>Weight in Stones</b>
Diminutive or smaller	Misc. Equipment
Tiny	1 stone
Small	2 stones
Medium	12 stones
Large	100 stones
Huge	800 stones
Gargantuan	6,400 stones
Colossal	50,000 stones

These figures are meant to serve as a useful rule of thumb, being roughly accurate for creatures similar in build and type to humans (i.e. fleshy humanoids). There will, however, be significant variance within each size category. Even typical animals of Huge size, for example, can easily range anywhere from 400 stones to 3,000 stones. Creatures of unusual material can obviously shatter these assumptions entirely (ranging from light-as-air ether cloud fairies to impossibly dense neutronium golems).

# ENCUMBRANCE RULES

<b>Strength</b>	<b>Light Load</b>	<b>Medium Load</b>	<b>Heavy Load</b>	<b>Lift</b>
1	½	1	2	10 lb.
2	½	1	2	20 lb.
3	½	1	2	30 lb.
4	½	1	2	40 lb.
5	1	1	2	50 lb.
6	1	1	2	60 lb.
7	2	2	4	70 lb.
8	2	3	6	80 lb.
9	3	4	8	90 lb.
10	3	5	10	100 lb.
11	4	6	12	115 lb.
12	4	7	14	130 lb.
13	5	8	16	150 lb.
14	5	9	18	175 lb.
15	6	10	20	200 lb.
16	6	11	22	230 lb.
17	7	12	24	260 lb.
18	7	13	26	300 lb.
19	8	14	28	350 lb.
20	8	15	30	400 lb.
21	9	16	32	460 lb.

22	9	17	34	520 lb.
23	10	18	36	600 lb.
24	10	19	38	700 lb.
25	11	20	40	800 lb.
26	11	21	42	920 lb.
27	12	22	44	1,040 lb.
28	12	23	46	1,200 lb.
29	13	24	48	1,400 lb.

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# 5E ENCUMBRANCE BY STONE

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[by Justin Alexander - October 18th, 2021](#)



*This simplified method for handling encumbrance using an imprecise, medieval-mindset way of thinking about weight was originally designed in 2011 for OD&D and 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition. This version of the rules is fully adapted for 5<sup>th</sup> Edition.*

Encumbrance, measured in stones carried, determines the load a character is currently carrying. A character's encumbrance can be normal, encumbered, or heavily encumbered. A character has a carrying capacity equal to their Strength in stones (which is the maximum weight they can carry), they are heavily encumbered if they are carrying more than two-thirds of this number (round down), and encumbered if they are carrying more than one-third this number (round down).

Each character has an encumbrance rule to keep track of these thresholds, which are precalculated on the table below. For example, a character with Strength 10 has an encumbrance rule of 10-6-3 (meaning they are encumbered when carrying 3 or more stones, heavily encumbered when carrying 6 or more stones, and cannot carry more than 10 stones).

**Encumbered:** An encumbered character's speed drops by 10 feet.

**Heavily Encumbered:** A heavily encumbered character's speed drops by 20 feet and they have disadvantage on ability checks, attack rolls, and saving throws that use Strength, Dexterity, or Constitution.

**Push, Drag, or Lift:** A character can push, drag, or lift up (without carrying) twice their carrying capacity. While pushing or dragging weight in excess of their carrying capacity, a character's speed drops to 5 feet.

**Adjusting for Size:** The encumbrance rule for a creature is doubled for each size category above Medium. The encumbrance rule is halved for Tiny creatures. (It is easiest to consider a Tiny creature as

having half its Strength score for the purposes of calculating encumbrance, a Large creature to have double its Strength, and so forth.)

**Variant - Quadrupeds:** Quadrupeds can carry heavier loads and have an encumbrance rule equal to twice an equivalent biped.

## WEIGHT BY STONE

To determine the number of stones carried by a character, simply consult the table below.

<u>Item</u>	<u>Weight in Stones</u>
Heavy Armor	4 stones
Medium Armor	2 stones
Light Armor	1 stone
Shield	½ stone
Weapon	½ stone
Weapon, light	Misc. Equipment
Ammunition	Misc. Equipment
Miscellaneous Equipment	1 stone per 5 bundles
Stowed Weapon	1 bundle
Heavy Item	1 or more stones
Light Clothing / Worn Item	0 stones
750 coins or gems	1 stone

**Miscellaneous Equipment:** Up to twenty items of the same type (scrolls, arrows, potions, rope) can be bundled together for the purposes of encumbrance, with five bundles being equal to 1 stone. Items of different types aren't bundled when determining encumbrance.

**Stowed Weapons:** Stowed weapons have been compactly stored in a way which makes them more difficult to draw (but easier to carry). Stowed weapons must be retrieved before they can be used, but they only count as 1 stone per 5 weapons.

**Heavy Items:** Anything weighing more than roughly 10 pounds can't be effectively bundled. Estimate a weight in stones (about 10-20 pounds to the stone). When in doubt, call it a stone.

**Clothing / Worn Items:** Worn items don't count for encumbrance, unless the individual items would qualify as heavy items.

## CONTAINERS

Weapons are assumed to be in sheaths, armor is worn, and you might have a wineskin or two strapped to your belt. But since there's a limit to how much you can hold in your hands, everything else you're carrying needs a place to live. As a rule of thumb, containers can carry:

<u>Container</u>	<u>Capacity</u>
Pouch	½ stone
Sack	1 stone
Backpack	2 stones
Backpack, Large	4 stones

Empty containers count as miscellaneous equipment. Containers being used to carry items don't count towards encumbrance.



Larger sacks (often referred to as “loot sacks”) are also possible, but these cannot generally be stored on the body. They must be carried in both hands.

## VARIANT - CREATURE WEIGHT BY SIZE

Your own weight does not count against your encumbrance, but these figures are important for mounts. (They’ll also come in handy if you need to carry a corpse or prisoner.)

<u>Creature Size</u>	<u>Weight in Stones</u>
Tiny	1 stone
Small	2 stones
Medium	12 stones
Large	100 stones
Huge	800 stones
Gargantuan	6,400 stones

These figures are meant to serve as a useful rule of thumb, being roughly accurate for creatures similar in build and type to humans (i.e. fleshy humanoids). There will, however, be significant variance within each size category. Even typical animals of Huge size, for example, can easily range anywhere from 400 stones to 3,000 stones. Creatures of unusual material can obviously shatter these assumptions entirely (ranging from light-as-air ether cloud fairies to impossibly dense neutronium golems).



## ENCUMBRANCE RULES

<b>Strength</b>	<b>Encumbered</b>	<b>Heavily Encumbered</b>	<b>Carrying Capacity</b>
1	0	½	1
2	0	1	2
3	1	2	3
4	1	2	4
5	1	3	5
6	2	4	6
7	2	4	7
8	2	5	8
9	3	6	9
10	3	6	10
11	3	7	11
12	4	8	12
13	4	8	13
14	4	9	14
15	5	10	15
16	5	10	16
17	5	11	17
18	6	12	18
19	6	12	19
20	6	13	20

21	7	14	21
22	7	14	22
23	7	15	23
24	8	16	24
25	8	16	25
26	8	17	26
27	9	18	27
28	9	18	28
29	9	19	29
30	10	20	30

# THE SHEET

Where the encumbrance by stone system really comes alive is the equipment sheet, which basically makes tracking encumbrance as easy as listing what you're carrying.

MISC. EQUIPMENT			HEAVY ITEMS		COINS / GEMS	
1	1 STONE	_____	_____	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	COPPER _____ SILVER _____ ELECTRUM _____ GOLD _____ PLATINUM _____ # OF GEMS _____	
2		_____				
3		_____				
4		_____				
5		_____				
6	2 STONES	_____	_____	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
7		_____				
8		_____				
9		_____				
10	3 STONES	_____	_____			INVENTORY OF GEMS 
11		_____				
12		_____				
13	4 STONES	_____	_____	SUPPLIES WATER/WINE <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>		
14		_____				
15		_____				
16	5 STONES	_____	_____			RATIONS <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
17		_____				
18		_____				
19	6 STONES	_____	_____	AMMUNITION <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>		
20		_____				
21		_____				
22	CONTAINERS	_____	_____			STORED ITEMS _____
23		_____				
24		_____				
25		_____				
26		_____				
27		_____				
28		_____				
29		_____				
30		_____				
CONTAINERS			BANKED GOLD		ENCUMBRANCE	
_____					ARMOR <input type="radio"/> SHIELD <input type="radio"/> WEAPONS <input type="radio"/>	
_____			_____		<input type="radio"/> TOTAL <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> ENCUMBERED <input type="radio"/> HEAVY ENCUMBERED	
_____			_____		<input type="radio"/> CARRYING CAPACITY	

**Encumbrance Rule:** You can write down your character's encumbrance rule (based on their Strength score) in the spaces provided in the lower right corner.

**Armor/Shield/Weapons:** The assumption is that your currently equipped armor, shield, and weapons will be listed for reference on the front of your character sheet. You can jot down the current encumbrance value for these items in the spaces provided in the lower right hand corner of the sheet.

**Coins/Gems:** These are listed in the upper right and their encumbrance is calculated as shown. (To quench the “I have one coin and it apparently weighs a ton” complaints, you can allow PCs carrying 20 or fewer coins to list them as “loose change” in the miscellaneous equipment section.)

**Heavy Items:** This section is for listing anything that qualifies as a heavy item (i.e., weighs 1 or more stones all by itself).

**Miscellaneous Items:** This column is the heart of the sheet. Simply list everything you’re carrying in bundles of 20 or less. When you’re done, you can immediately see how many stones of miscellaneous equipment you’re carrying. Bam.

Add Misc. Equipment + Heavy Items + Coins/Gems + Armor/Shield/Weapons to determine your Total Encumbrance. In practice, this is all single digit arithmetic and adjusting your encumbrance on-the-fly during an adventure is practically automatic.

Moving equipment to your horse? Picked up a bunch of treasure? Throwing away your shield in order to run away from the goblin horde at your heels? It can all be done in seconds.

## TIPS AND TRICKS

**Stored Items:** This section of the sheet is for anything you own that isn’t currently being carried by your character.

**Inventory of Gems:** The specific value of gems are tracked separately to make calculating coin/gem encumbrance easier.

**Containers:** This area is used for listing containers in use (which don’t count against encumbrance). Empty containers should be listed as miscellaneous equipment. There are two easy methods for tracking which items are in which container:

1. List miscellaneous equipment slot numbers next to the container.
2. Put a symbol (star, circle, square, etc.) next to the container, then mark items in the container with the same symbol.

**Tracking Supplies:** The intention is that you list your supplies in the miscellaneous equipment section, but you can quickly check off supplies used on the trackers. At some point of convenience, you can go through your equipment list, adjust the totals, and then erase the supply checklists to start anew.

**The Blank Space:** After making the sheet I kept expecting something to crop up that I’d forgotten. (At which point I’d have this convenient blank space to slot it into.) After a several years, nobody has suggested anything. (Let me know if you think of something.)

## DESIGN NOTES

The goal of the encumbrance by stone system is to simplify the encumbrance rules to the point where:

1. It is virtually effortless to track encumbrance and, therefore,
2. The rules can be used to meaningful effect on-the-fly during actual gameplay.

All the way back in 1974, this type of gameplay was discussed. In *Volume 3: The Underworld & Wilderness Adventures*, for example, we can read:

If the adventurers choose to flee, the monster will continue to pursue in a straight line as long as there is not more than 90 feet between the two. (...)

Distance will open or close dependent upon the relative speeds of the two parties, men according to their encumbrance and monsters according to the speed given on the Monster Table in Volume II. In order to move faster characters may elect to discard items such as treasure, weapons, shields, etc. in order to lighten encumbrance.

But in actual practice the encumbrance rules were such a pain in the ass – and have remained such a pain in the ass – that either (a) they're not used at all or (b) the amount of calculation required to adjust your encumbrance is sufficiently onerous that no one is going to try to do it in the middle of a chase scene.

When I started using the encumbrance by stone system, however, I almost immediately saw explicit encumbrance-based play crop up in actual play. And although “encumbrance-based play” may not sound all that exciting at first glance, being forced to throw away your favorite shield or abandon several weeks worth of rations on the pack horse actually creates really cool moments! (Going back for your shield, for example, can be a unique motivator. Running out of food because you had to leave the rations behind can throw your plans completely out of whack and force you to start improvising.)

My experience has been that, once you have a fully functional encumbrance system, you'll wonder how you ever lived without it. Encumbrance certainly isn't essential to every adventure, but it is particularly vital for expedition-based play: It is a budget you are spending to prepare for the expedition and it is also frequently the limit on the rewards you can bring back. The desire to manage and expand your encumbrance limits for an expedition (by using mounts, pack animals, and/or hirelings) will frequently unlock unique gameplay and storytelling opportunities.

Running expedition-based play without encumbrance is like running combat without keeping track of hit points. The encumbrance by stone just makes it easy to do what you need to do.

## THINKING ABOUT STONES

Roughly speaking, for the purposes of estimating the stone weight of larger items, you can assume that a stone is equal to 15 lbs. in 5<sup>th</sup> Edition.

Thinking about the “value” of a stone in such concrete terms, however, is to largely miss the point of the system: The stone is deliberately chosen as an obscure unit of measurement whose definition is intentionally vague. The stone is not defined as a specific weight; it exists in a nebulous range, but probably somewhere between 10 and 20 pounds most of the time.

This is based on historical fact: Although eventually set by British law at 14 pounds, the stone historically varied depending on the commodity being traded and the location in which it was being traded. (For example, the 1772 edition of the *Encyclopedia Britannica* states that a stone of beef was eight pounds in London, twelve pounds in Hertfordshire, and sixteen pounds in Scotland.) This makes it fairly ideal to provide a system which uses crude approximation in an effort to vastly simplify the bookkeeping involved with tracking encumbrance. And the slightly archaic nature of the terminology is also immersive for a fantasy world. (“I'm carrying about eight stone.”)

“But I'm British!”

The British still commonly use stones to measure body weight. And I've heard from some, but not all, that this makes it too difficult to slip into the medieval/Renaissance mindset where weights are relative and often imprecise.

If you find that to be the case for yourself, I recommend just swapping out the term “stone” for something else. You can go for something generic like “slots,” although you lose the immersive quality of

the system (where both you and your character think of their load in similar terms). Another option would be a purely fictional term. For example, you might reframe the system using dwarven daliks.

## SPECIAL THANKS

The design of this system was originally inspired by [Delta's D&D Hotspot](#) and [\*Lamentations of the Flame Princess\*](#).