

OWLBEAR TACTICS

Is it an owl? Is it a bear? It's an owlbear! Few creatures are more iconic than the owlbear, which is really just a pissed-off mutant bear with the face of an owl. Here are some basic tactics for them.

1. **Owlbears are angry as hell.** For whatever reason, owlbears are just plain aggressive. Maybe it's the grizzly in them? Either way, don't expect an owlbear to back down from a fight.
2. **Owlbears are hunters.** Owlbears have the Keen Sight and Smell feature, which means they can spot/smell you from a distance. Plus, they have darkvision 60 ft., which means they are probably nocturnal predators. Camping characters might get a surprise visit from one of these monstrosities.
3. **Owlbears are total brutes.** There's nothing fancy about the way an owlbear attacks. It claws you and it beaks you until you're dead or it is.

GIANT SPIDER TACTICS

Giant spiders are not just a staple of fantasy stories, but serve as dangerous low-level challenges. In fact, they're one of my favorites. Here's why.

1. **Giant spiders are ambush predators.** Giant spiders have blindsight and darkvision, Stealth +7, and they can spider climb. It's pretty rare that they won't get the drop on the party—literally. A creature that gets surprise gets to act on the first round of combat while every other participant doesn't. Pretty fun.
2. **Giant spiders use webs.** Not only does a giant spider have a web that it can shoot at creatures within 60 feet of it, but it uses its normal webs to trap creatures. Expect a spider's lair to be filled with plenty of sticky webbing to trap wanderers. Check out either the 5e gamemaster's book or the spell web in the player's guide to learn how webs work when used as hazards.
3. **Giant spiders web then bite.** A giant spider targets the smallest/weakest looking creature that it can see with its webs. Once the web hits and it gets trapped, it slides in to bite it, hoping that its poison paralyzes it. Once the target is paralyzed, the spider drags it further into its webs.

GIANT CONSTRICTOR SNAKE TACTICS

Giant constrictor snakes are freakin' huge. Literally! They take up a 15-foot cube and have a reach of 10 feet with their bite. At CR 2, this makes them one of the lowest CR creatures of that size.

1. **Constrictor snakes ambush.** Constrictor snakes hunt using glands on their top of their mouths which essentially works as blindsight. Place them in areas with lots of overgrowth where they are totally obscured, relying on their blindsight to find their foes. Alternatively, place them

in magical darkness, pairing them with yugoloths or darkmantles who have the innate ability to cast *darkness*. They can also swim, so they are good underwater creatures, too.

2. **Attack of opportunity triggerers.** When paired with a creature that can control the snake—like a druid or yuan-ti—giant constrictor snakes are awesome for placing in the middle of an area where anybody is trying to move past them. And with 60 hit points, this makes them into veritable tanks at low levels.
3. **Constrict if possible, then bite.** Any creature that comes within the snake's range gets a big bol' bite from its 10-foot reach bite attack. You might even Ready this attack, since doing so seems “snake-like” and doesn't use up any more of the snake's action economy than normal. But if a creature manages to come within 5 feet of it, the snake instead constricts. Once the snake constricts a creature, it focuses its bite attack from thereon.
4. **Flee when injured.** Giant constrictor snakes encountered in the wild have no reason to hang around for a meal that's too tough to catch. If the snake takes 50% or more damage, it slips away.
5. **Optional rule: no squeeze.** One of the things that makes 5e funky compared to earlier editions is that a Huge creature fits into a square/cube and no other format. A giant constrictor snake is Huge certainly when coiled, but it's also much longer than it is wide. As such, I get rid of the rule that says they suffer penalties when they try to fit through an area that's smaller than they are. A giant constrictor snake should be able to slip through a Medium or larger area without any trouble.

GIANT ELK

Giant elk are pretty cool monsters that I don't think get enough attention. It's easy to write them off as a “dire deer”, but really, they're more akin to fey than beasts.

1. **Giant elk are intelligent.** Like giant eagles, giant elk have pretty high Intelligence scores and can understand a wide variety of languages (although, it can't speak them). Its Intelligence is on par with orcs, so they have a basic understanding of tactics.
2. **Giant elk charge!** Giant elk have the Charge feature, which means an elk does extra damage when it moves 20 feet then hits a creature with its horns. Plus, there is a chance that the elk might knock the creature prone.
3. **Stomp on prone creatures.** An elk's most devastating attack is its hooves. However, it can only use its hooves against prone creatures. If there are no prone creatures present, it relies on its horns or it backs up to make another Charge attack.
4. **Elk preserve themselves.** Giant elk have fantastic Wisdom scores. This means that they don't attack creatures who they recognize they have very little chance of defeating, unless doing so would protect those in its care. And if the elk takes significant damage during combat, it flees, using its impressive 60 ft. (120 ft. with Dash) to get away.