Item-Based Encumbrance

By Gavin Norman

Old-School Essentials presents two options for determining characters' movement rates based on the amount of gear and treasure carried. This article presents a third option for groups wishing to use a more abstract approach based on tracking the number of items carried.

Tracking Significant Items Carried

Instead of tracking the *weight (in coins)* of items carried, players using this alternative encumbrance system track the number of *significant items* carried.

General guideline: An object that can be carried in one hand counts as 1 item and an object that requires two hands to carry counts as 2 items. Very heavy or bulky objects may count as 3 or more items, per referee judgement.

Equipped and Packed Items

Each item carried is classified as *equipped* or *packed*.

Equipped items: Anything the character is holding, actively using, or has ready to use at short notice: armour worn, shields or weapons held, sheathed weapons, items worn on the belt.

Packed items: All other equipment, packed into pockets, sacks, backpacks, etc. In combat, retrieving a packed item optionally takes one round.

Character Sheet

The *Purist Character Sheet*, available at **necroticgnome.com**, includes a version supporting item-based encumbrance.

Weapons and Armour

Weapons: One-handed weapons count as 1 item; two-handed weapons count as 2 items.

Ammunition: The encumbrance of missile weapons already includes the ammunition and its container.

Armour: Shields count as 1 item; light armour (e.g. leather) counts as 1 item; heavy armour (e.g. chainmail) counts as 2 items. Clothing (i.e. unarmoured) does not count as encumbering.

Adventuring Gear

The item weights of standard adventuring gear are listed in the *Adventuring Gear Item-Based Encumbrance* table, opposite.

Bundled items: Some items (e.g. torches, rations) are usually purchased and carried in bundles. Up to 3 such items (e.g. individual torches or days' rations) bundled together count as 1 item.

Tiny items: Some very small items (e.g. necklaces, rings) are not treated as encumbering unless carried in large numbers (referee's judgement).

Storage: Containers (e.g. backpacks, sacks) only count as an item when not in use. The referee must judge how much can be stored in a container.

Treasure

Coins and gems: Up to 100 coins or gems count as 1 item.

Jewellery: Tiny pieces (e.g. necklaces, rings) do not count as encumbering; larger pieces count as 1 item.

Magic items: Staves count as 2 items; others count as 1 item.

Movement Rate

Movement rate is determined by the number of items carried, shown in the *Item-Based Encumbrance* table. A character's equipped and packed items should both be looked up in the table and the slower movement rate used.

Item-Based Encumbrance

Equip. Items	Packed Items	Move. Rate
0–3	0–10	120' (40')
4–5	11–12	90' (30')
6–7	13–14	60' (20')
8–9	15–16	30' (10')

Maximum load: A character carrying more than 9 equipped items or more than 16 packed items cannot move.

Mounts and Vehicles

The number of items that mounts or vehicles can carry is calculated by dividing their coin capacity (defined in *Old-School Essentials*) by 100. The distinction between packed and equipped items does not apply to mounts and vehicles.

Example: A riding horse can to carry up to 30 items (3,000 coins) unencumbered and a maximum of 60 items (6,000 coins).

Item-Based Encumbrance Example

Morgan, a fighter, has the following gear:

6 equipped items: Chainmail (2 items), shield (1 item), sword (1 item), shortbow (2 items, including quiver + arrows).

4 packed items: Rope (1 item), tinder box (1 item), 3 iron rations (bundle, 1 item), waterskin (1 item).

Movement rate: Looking at the encumbrance table, Morgan's 6 equipped items put her at movement rate 60' (20') and her 4 packed items at 120' (40'). She thus has a movement rate of 60' (20')—the slower of the two.

STR Modifier (Optional Rule)

A character's melee STR modifier (see *Ability Scores* in *Old-School Essentials*) may be applied to the number of packed items at each movement rate band. e.g. a character with STR 16 (+2 modifier) can carry up to 12 packed items at 120' (40').

Adventuring Gear Item-Based Encumbrance

Item	Encumbrance
Backpack	1 (storage)
Crowbar	1
Garlic	0 (tiny)
Grappling hook	1
Hammer (small)	1
Holy symbol	0 (tiny)
Holy water (vial)	1
Iron spikes (12)	1
Lantern	1
Mirror (hand-sized, steel)	1
Oil (1 flask)	1
Pole (10' long, wooden)	2
Rations (iron, 7 days)	3 (bundle)
Rations (standard, 7 days)	3 (bundle)
Rope (50')	1
Sack (large)	1 (storage)
Sack (small)	1 (storage)
Stakes (3) and mallet	2 (bundle)
Thieves' tools	1
Tinder box (flint & steel)	1
Torches (6)	2 (bundle)
Waterskin	1
Wine (2 pints)	1
Wolfsbane (1 bunch)	1

Bundle: Lists the item weight of the number of individual items in the bundle when bought (e.g. 7 rations = 3 items). **Storage:** Only counts as an item when not in use. The referee must judge how much can be stored in a container. **Tiny:** Not encumbering unless carried in large numbers.