

SAFE HAVENS

REST RULES VARIANT

Dungeons and Dragons games are as varied as the people who play and the characters they are inspired to create. Because of this complexity, some rules that work for one group won't work for another. For example, in some games there is a lot of travel time. A West Marches-style game, for example, may have several days or even weeks of travel in a single session, with any number of combat encounters along the way. In these types of games, the standard rules for short and long rests don't work very well.

The Gritty Realism rules variant changes the duration of short rests to 8 hours and the duration of long rests to 1 week, but this too begins to feel clunky when your party of adventurers wants to explore that deep dark dungeon without having to spend an entire uninterrupted week to get their spells and abilities back.

Because neither of these sets of rules work well for games that include a balanced focus on travel encounters and dungeon dives, I devised this new rule, which I have dubbed the "Safe Haven Rests Rule". The intention is to bridge the gap between the two existing options, thus providing Dungeon Masters with another option in their toolbox for managing short and long rests in order to provide their players with a challenging, but meaningful experience.

SAFE HAVEN REST RULE DEFINITION

Under this new rule variation, short rests are a period of extended downtime, at least 8 hours long, during which a character sleeps or performs light activity: reading, talking, eating, or standing watch, for no more than 2 hours. In general, a short rest will be taken overnight, with one or more players keeping watch in shifts. This does not constitute a long rest because players must be on alert for the dangers that surround them in the world. Whether in the wilds of the world, the caverns beneath the earth, or the den of a tentatively allied thieves' guild, the majority of adventures take place in places that require the average adventurer to keep themselves on alert at all times.

In contrast, a long rest is a period of no less than 24 hours in a Safe Haven. During this time, players are welcome to pursue work, shop, gather information in the local tavern, or any other activity, so long as that activity does not compromise the security or safety of the Safe Haven for the player or their companions and the player gets a full night's rest as well. A character can't benefit from more than one long rest in a one-week period, and a character must have at least 1 hit point at the start of the rest to gain its benefits.

SAFE HAVENS

A 'Safe Haven' as defined by these rules is "a place where adventurers can rest without the need to guard themselves or be on alert", or, more specifically "a safe and secure place where the basic needs of the adventurers are met without violence or fears of violence."

This definition is intentionally a bit vague, allowing the Dungeon Master to decide what constitutes a Safe Haven for their players during the course of the game.

USING SAFE HAVENS

Determining whether a location counts as a Safe Haven comes down to a few key factors: safety and security. A place is considered "safe" if the adventurers have a reasonable expectation that the environment or environmental factors will not be a detriment to their quality of life. A place is considered "secure" if the adventurers have a reasonable expectation that violence will not occur.

Let's check out a few examples:

- The party stops in a small town and purchases rooms in the local inn. There have been reports of some gnoll attacks nearby, but the innkeeper assures you those rumors haven't touched this place. The players reasonably assume that this is a Safe Haven.
- The party sets up camp on the edge of the Haunted Forest. Many strange creatures have been seen in these woods, and they have been hired to investigate. This is not a Safe Haven.

These first examples are fairly simple and straight forward, but there are plenty of things you can do as a DM or as a player to shake things up.

For example:

- The innkeeper was wrong! Gnolls attack the following day around lunch time. The party benefits from the short rest the night before, but this place is no longer a Safe Haven, and their long rest has been interrupted.
- Knowing that the woods are unsafe, Scanlan, bard extraordinaire, summons forth his Magnificent Mansion. The party spends a day resting and recovering in the safety of the mansion, and therefore benefit from a long rest.

TWEAKING THIS RULE

Tweaking and tuning this rule for your campaigns is extraordinarily easy.

For campaigns with more action, if you still want to inject a bit of tension into your games, feel free to use the standard short and long rest rules, adding the "Safe Haven" caveat for the party to fully benefit from a long rest. Alternatively, you could allow long rests to take place over 12 hours instead of 24, and/or reduce the short rests to 2 hours. If this rule doesn't work perfectly for you, make it yours!

For campaigns with even more travel, or for those cruel DMs who want to really stretch the resources of their players, feel free to extend long rests to 48 hours or more. See how long the rogue can hold out before stealing from the wrong person and ruining the security of the Safe Haven for their allies.