

DRAGONS OF MIDDLE-EARTH

For thousands of years, they have dwelled in the dark places of the world, and now the Dragons are here! Donning suitably fireproof attire, Mat Ward goes in search of the secrets of these deathless wyrms.



Where some creatures, such as the Balrog, endure only in legends of certain races, Dragons are regarded as despoilers across all Middle-earth. The existence of Dragons is known to all, not only the ancient races of Elves and Dwarves. Tales of Dragons spread far and wide, even beyond the borders of Gondor and Rohan.

Dragons are talked of even in the isolated and parochial Shire – albeit in fanciful and disbelieving tones. Terrible places are compared to “Dragon’s Dens,” and some Hobbits are described as brave enough to “jump down a Dragon’s throat.”

Even in the quietest corner of Middle-earth, Dragons have made a lasting impression, one that stands in testament to the evils these great beasts have wrought.

It is true that most Dragons have been forgotten, their names lost in the mists of time. Even so, the fates of several terrible beasts have been preserved by the evils of their deeds. Gandalf talks to Frodo of Ancalagon the Black, a mighty Dragon of yore whose fire was powerful enough to consume the lesser Rings of Power. Théoden gifts Merry a horn taken from the hoard of Scatha the Worm, another great Dragon who could boast the destruction of at least one Dwarven hold. Of course, most famous of all the Dragons to terrorize Middle-earth is Smaug, despoiler of Erebor and ruination of Durin’s Folk.

Physically, individual Dragons can vary to an enormous degree. The most dangerous are winged, able to travel several leagues in one beat of their leathery wings. Others must rely on their legs for locomotion. Though all have thick, scaly hides, the color can vary enormously, from brilliant reds and golden oranges through to sepulchral greys and midnight blues. These colors have no bearing on the abilities of the Dragon but do serve to distinguish one draconic tyrant from another.

Dragons are huge and savage creatures, able to crush armor and bone as easily as a Man would snap a twig. This formidable might is often coupled with the ability to breathe great gouts of flame or a beguiling nature as enrapturing as the darkest of magics. Dragons are almost impossible to dominate or even reason with, for their ferocious strength is invariably wedded to a keen intelligence, the equal of any loremaster of the wise. Dragons do what they wish, when they wish to do it – only a dire threat can stay a Dragon from its goal. As such, Dragons are perhaps not truly evil but rather utterly amoral. In vigor and wisdom, Dragons are as high above Men as the Men are above cattle. Dragons are predators, and all in the world are their prey.





The Ole Mind Trick

The absolute best way to nail an enemy Dragon is with Gandalf (or possibly Saruman). If you can get past the Dragon's magical resistance with an Immobilize spell, you can then surround and overwhelm the beast. If the Dragon doesn't expire on the spot, you might be able to get it to flee.

Dragon

Points Value: 250

F	S	D	A	W	C	M / W / F
7/2+	7	7	4	7	4	3 / 3 / 3

Wyrm of Legend

A Dragon may have two of the following abilities at additional cost.

Breathe Fire 50 points
Fly 50 points

Wyrmtongue 50 points
Tough Hide 50 points

Sudden Death

A quick glance at the Dragon's profile is enough to set the heart apace. It has all the ruthless combat ability of a Mordor Troll and then some. Not only does a Dragon fight like a tiger (albeit a much bigger, more ferocious tiger), it is Resistant to Magic, causes Terror, reduces enemy Courage, and charges as if it were a Monstrous Mount – not bad at all for a mere 250 points. That said, the Dragon does come with a slight downside. Being ancient creatures, Dragons are loathe to throw their lives away in battle. Thus, each time one suffers a Wound, it must pass a Courage test or flee. This may sound problematic, but I assure you it's not – Courage 4 and 3 Will Points make failure very unlikely. Besides, your enemy has to wound the Dragon first. At Defense 7, that's not so easy. Of course, you're going to make that a bit harder by being cunning.

Choosing a Victim

Getting the most out of your Dragon, much like using Gûlavhar or Mordor Trolls to their potential, requires picking the right target to attack: Warriors. With lots of Attacks and a high Strength, the Dragon can chew its way through an army if given the chance, but you've got to maintain momentum. Thus, you must choose targets that you can kill. Such is the size of the Dragon's base that it can normally charge at least two models, and such is its power that it will reliably kill any Warrior other than an Ent in a single turn. Just beware of Heroes! Even though the Dragon's Fight value is superior to that of all but Elven Heroes, one unlucky turn is enough for Aragorn, Imrahil, or Dain to land several wounding blows and force those incredibly unwelcome Courage Tests.

Have Wings – Will Travel

You don't have to upgrade your Dragon, but I doubt that anyone reading this article is going to pass up the chance to have his





Ignorance Is Bliss

For a more challenging approach, try to slow the Dragon down by feeding it one Warrior at a time, no more, no less. While the Dragon is slowly devouring your willing volunteers, you can concentrate on dismantling the rest of the enemy army and force Courage Tests when the rest of the force is broken.

scaly beastie do even more damage. Well, are you? I thought not.

Dragons come with four options: Fly, Breathe Fire, Wyrmtongue, and Tough Hide. Only two can be selected, capping your Dragon's points cost at 350. Thus, it's worth giving thought to the abilities you'll use the most.

For me, a winged Dragon is all but essential. It's effectively a license to go wherever you want. A Dragon that flies can hit hard and withdraw out of counterattack range before the enemy can react. It's a bit like having a Nazgûl on a Fell Beast really, a rock-hard and unstoppable one. The classic ability to pair up with wings is Breathe Fire. We've got real dragon-fire in The Lord of The Rings! If a Dragon breathes fire on you in Middle-earth, you (and the six or so guys next to you) burst into flames, run around for a bit, and then die – no half measures. As such, Breathe Fire is an option for the true pyromaniac (or at least the gamer with pyromaniac tendencies who's got some cavalry in his army and would love to make the enemy spread out a bit). If your enemies don't spread out, they will the first time you gleefully shout "Whoomph!" and start rolling to wound against a 5" section of their battle line.

Mind over Matter?

The remaining two options, Wyrmtongue and Tough Hide, are there for those with subtlety and those without, respectively. Wyrmtongue allows the Dragon to cast spells at the enemy – specifically, Transfix, Compel, and Sap Will. This little combo allows you to unleash your Dragons on enemy Heroes. Not surprisingly, a Transfixed Hero in combat with a Dragon

is not long for the world. Tough Hide, on the other hand, is there to improve your combat odds the old-fashioned way – by making you harder to hurt. Two extra Wounds is nice, but +2 Defense is even nicer, giving you extra protection against those aforementioned Courage Tests.

What kind of army does a Dragon suit best? Truth is, it's pretty good in any army. Its combination of muscle, firepower, and speed makes it a perfect addition to Moria Goblins, Easterlings, Orcs, Specters, Spiders, Warg Riders...you get the idea. The only real condition is to make sure the rest of your army can't easily be squashed by bow fire. The Dragon's might will be for nothing if the rest of his army runs away.

Elven Steel

Many Elven Heroes can fight a Dragon on equal terms, and most have a sufficiently high Courage that they'll do so without hesitation. If you really want the job done, invest in Gil-galad. Not only does he have a Fight value of 9, but his magic spear can easily penetrate even Dragon hide.



DEEPWOOD DRAGONS



Main Contingent Dol Guldur

- ① 1 Spider Queen
75 points
- ② 25 Wild Wargs
200 points
- ③ 5 Giant Spiders
100 points
- ④ 2 Bat Swarms
70 points

Allied Contingent Monsters of Middle-earth

- ⑤ Dragon
with Fly
300 points

Total 745 points

Personally, I love the idea of an army of (let's be unkind) monsters – not Orcs, Goblins, or corrupt Men – the kind of evil that goes bump in the night. This army plays to that desire, drawing mostly upon Dol Guldur for its rank-and-file.

Everything in this army can move 10" or more, which gives you all the flexibility of a cavalry force but in an altogether more creepy-crawly way. Wild Wargs can beat most Good Warriors in one-on-one fights, and Giant Spiders are even better – though a little more fragile. You've got to hit fast, hit hard, crush one enemy flank, and roll up the line before your opponent can react.

This force includes a slightly cheaper Dragon. The Fly ability is a must-have, but other upgrades have been foregone in favor of including another five Wargs in the army. For best results, you need to set the

Dragon loose on the staunchest part of your opponent's line, as the rest of your force is quite fragile and will quickly become bogged down if fighting against elites. In the unlikely event that your Dragon needs a little backup, send in a Bat Swarm to help it out by reducing the Fight value of a dangerous foe.

This force excels against compact armies, where you don't have to worry about being outnumbered. Because of your troops' relatively low Defense values, they are fair game to anyone who can swing a sword. On the other hand, most of your models are Strength 4 or 5; thus, even heavy armor is little protection against your vengeful attacks. Elves, Dwarves, Gondor, and Rohan all fall easily to this army, but watch out for forces like Arnor or the Shire that can pack 50 or more models in a 750-point force.

DRAGONS OF THE EAST



The choice of Dragon to work alongside this army is a difficult one. Easterlings lack artillery, and a fire-breathing reptile is a good substitute. On the other hand, the golden legions also suffer from having no wizards of their own. Which to choose? I've gone for a flying, fire-breathing Dragon, because the resultant large-scale destruction really appeals to me.

You'll notice that this army is relatively compact at a mere 34 models, but every model in the army can take a pounding. Easterlings and Dragons make for a nice combination. The Dragon deals with enemy archers and allows the Easterling spear formations to go relatively unmolested as they close with the enemy.

For best results, try to think of your army not as 34 models, but rather three large models: the Dragon and two Easterling phalanxes. On a board with

dense terrain, use your phalanxes to control choke points while the Dragon flanks the enemy – few armies can survive being caught between pikes and a raging monster. On more open ground, keep the Easterlings together, the better to fend off enemy cavalry.

This army does best against the two extremes. Hordes of military detritus, such as Hobbits, can't really touch it as everything has high Defense and Fight values. At the other end of the scale, Elves and Dwarves lack the numbers to counter the advantage a Dragon brings. This match is by no means an easy one to win, but odds do favor the Evil player. This force suffers against the middling armies, such as Gondor and Rohan, who have both high Defense values and relatively inexpensive troops. As a rule, you can expect to be outnumbered two to one in such a match.

Main Contingent The Easterlings

1 Easterling Captain
with Easterling halberd
55 points

2 Easterling Captain
with Easterling halberd
55 points

3 16 Easterlings
6 with shields and 10
with shields and spears
148 points

4 15 Easterlings
5 with shields and 10
with shields and spears
140 points

Allied Contingent Monsters of Middle-earth

5 Dragon
with Fly and Breathe Fire
350 points

Total 748 points

PAINTING YOUR DRAGON

A Dragon model instantly becomes the centerpiece of any Evil force. Here are some tips for painting your very own winged horror.



Paint the claws and horns Scorched Brown and then highlight with a 50/50 mix of Scorched Brown and Bleached Bone. Add increasing amounts of Bleached Bone to the mix for each subsequent highlight layer.



Basecoat the eyes with Bronzed Flesh and highlight with Bleached Bone. Add a glossy sheen with a few glazes of Yellow Ink. Finally, highlight the eye with a dot of Skull White.



Painting Scales



Begin by applying an even basecoat mixed from three parts Red Gore and one part Liche Purple.



Paint the individual scales with Red Gore. You may need several coats to achieve an even covering.



Paint a layer of thinned-down Blood Red around the outer edge of each scale as a first highlight.



Apply a finer highlight of Blazing Orange around the edges of the scales.



Highlight the sharpest edges of the most prominent scales with a very fine layer of Fiery Orange.



Paint the wing membrane in exactly the same colors as the scales, but make use of the drybrushing technique.



Basecoat the tongue with a mix of Chaos Black and Red Gore. Add Bleached Bone to the mix for subsequent highlights. Finally, highlight with a mix of Bleached Bone and Red Gore.



For links to information on assembling and modeling your Dragon, visit

www.games-workshop.com/whitedwarf/wd330

Color Variants

We asked Mark Bedford of Forge World fame to paint a Dragon in an alternative color scheme. This green-scaled beast uses a naturalistic palette and is based on pictures of real-world reptiles. Mark chose the colors listed below for the scales and used the same techniques described for the red Dragon.



-  **Basecoat**
75% Catachan Green, 25% Scorched Brown
-  **Highlight 1**
Catachan Green
-  **Highlight 2**
75% Catachan Green, 25% Kommando Khaki
-  **Highlight 3**
50% Catachan Green, 50% Kommando Khaki