

*Administrative note: This specific rule (last updated in Dec of 2024) is excerpted from/and is part of the full "Rob's World!" House rules available online at: <<https://www.robsworld.org/3ehsrls.pdf>> - Author: Robert Vaessen*

## **SPEAKING DURING COMBAT:**

Speaking is defined as a 'Not an action' type of action (ref PH page 139). It is so minor that it is not even considered a free action. It can happen during a character's turn, sometimes outside a character's turn, and it can happen in conjunction with or at the same time along with other traditional actions (Standard, Move, Free, Swift, Immediate). In some cases, under certain circumstances, its use can be limited (Example: During execution of 'Restricted activities' (ref RC page 7), in zones of silence, underwater).

Normally, during combat (encounters where initiative is used to moderate actions), a character\* may only speak when it is their turn, unless they have an Intelligence bonus. If a character has an intelligence bonus, then they may speak during other character's turns as well as their own. All characters get a minimum of one speaking turn per combat round. That minimum/default speaking turn may only be used during that character's turn. Characters with an Intelligence bonus receive (INT modifier -1) additional speaking opportunities during the round.

Intelligence 14-15: +1 speaking opportunity

Intelligence 16-17: +2 speaking opportunities

Intelligence 18-19: +3 speaking opportunities

For INT. above 19. See PH pg 8.

Characters that receive additional speaking opportunities may use the additional speaking opportunities during other character's turns. A character may not speak more times than there are characters involved in the combat. For example: Two player characters are fighting a Troll. Character A. has an 18 Intelligence. He may speak during his turn, during character B's turn and during the Troll's turn (he's counted as a character). Character A. may not speak a 4th time during the combat round.

A character may always refrain from speaking. In addition, a character may refrain from speaking during his/her turn, while still retaining the ability/reserving the right to speak *out-of-turn* (during another character's turn). Provided the character has an appropriate INT modifier/additional speaking opportunities (as indicated above).

When characters speak *'out of turn'*, they may do so just before or after another character's turn. They may not speak during another player's turn. They may not interrupt that character's turn with their speech.

Under no conditions does speaking *'out of turn'* create a *'command word'* activation situation. Characters may only use verbal *'commands'* (to trigger/cast spells, magic items, spell like effects, etc.) during their turn or in conjunction with an immediate action.

In order to facilitate this rule; players will not be prompted to speak or not speak during any turn (by the DM). Instead, they should act on their own, prefacing *'in character'* speech with the phrase *"I'm speaking here"*. A raised hand may also be appropriate to draw attention to your character's action/speech.

**When can't you speak?** - You (a player character, an NPC, or a monster) cannot speak out of turn unless you have an INT bonus (see above). You cannot speak if you are surprised, asleep, unconscious or flat-footed. According to the PH (pg 144), some DMs may rule that a character can't speak while flat-footed (and thus can't warn allies of a surprise/threat until that character has a chance to act (i.e. is no longer flat-footed). Unless otherwise noted (perhaps by an alternate DMs ruling), our campaign will adhere to this premise - You can't speak if you're flat-footed.

Note that the prohibitions to speaking indicated here extend to silent forms of speaking as well - A character can't speak telepathically, silently (hand signals/signs such as 'Battle Language' skill from Heroes of Battle page 95) or verbally, when impaired through the conditions listed above (possibly others/as determined by the DM). Clearly there are other factors and environmental conditions which might inhibit a character's speech. For example: Characters can't speak underwater (unless the race is some sort of aquatic native), and a zone of silence would also prevent normal speech.

*Keep in mind that a combat round only lasts six seconds. Characters may not use their speaking turns to recite great epics, give long elaborate speeches, or offer intricate instructions/suggestions. The DM may impose a time limit if he/she feels that characters are abusing this rule.*

\*Character implies player or non-player characters, including monsters.