

CHRYSALIS

Chapter 15 How to last hi



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This world contains a bizarrely game-like system. The information I'm in need of most is exactly how this system functions, for example, how does the system award XP when a monster dies?

Is it divided evenly amongst everything that caused damage? Or is all of the experience awarded to the one who deals the final blow? I've never received a system announcement awarding experience during combat, only after the prey has expired.

So I can assume that only when something dies is XP awarded for it.

Let's test a few theories then.

As I draw near the sounds of combat are growing louder and louder. Sticking to the shadows I peer around the rock crevices to identify the combatants.

Locked in furious battle I see four of the filthy claw centipedes and a croca-beast.

By the shining beard of Gandalf I hate those stupid centipedes, they think they're so great! The four crawling monstrosities have surrounded the much larger, hulking, walking croc, advancing and retreating to distract their foe and create chances for the others.

The croca-beast is doing its best to watch all of its opponents but they are simply too slippery, always moving, circling and feinting. The beast has already been wounded in several places, green ichor can be seen leaking from wounds on the creature. It isn't going down without a fight though, one centipede already lies twitching at its feet, completely torn in half.

Slash!

Bite!

The monsters whirl in deadly combat, swinging claws and chomping fangs!

This is quite thrilling!

I try to keep an eye on my surroundings however. The last thing I want is one of those stupid slugs to slide up and eat me when I'm not looking. Surprisingly, it seems as though most monsters are giving this fight a wide berth, unwilling to get dragged in to a fight between such dangerous opponents.

I'm happy to chip in however.

The croca is snapping its jaws towards one centipede whilst using its claws ward of the others. Its tail swings furiously behind it, trying to defend its vulnerable back as it turns. Suddenly it coils up, crouching low.

This is it!

I hurriedly turn and begin to take aim and as the croca launches itself forward at one of its tormentors, I fire a blast at one of the centipedes, drenching the foul thing in my acid.

As quickly as I can I re-aim and fire another shot at the croca itself, splashing the burning liquid down its left side.

By this time the giant croc has already clamped its jaws shut on its victim, swinging its massive head from side to side it snaps repeatedly down, audibly crunching the exoskeleton of the centipede that writhes and twists madly in the death grip.

However, in leaping forth so boldly the croca has left itself open to retaliation, the remaining three centipedes, including the victim of my sneak attack, heave leapt forth, unwilling to let this chance slip. By taking advantage of the certain death of their comrade they plunge forward with wriggling glee, sinking fangs and claws into the croca beast, tearing away at their prey.

One of the centipedes rears up the end of its body, displaying a spike which it flips forward and drives into the croca's back, surely injecting some form of poison.

The larger monster roars in rage and with a massive swing of its head snaps the centipede in half, flinging pieces away into the darkness, before turning on the remaining pests. However with my acid burning it and the poison in its system its moving slower and slower.

The three surrounding centipedes withdraw from the monster, circling at range, waiting for the poison and damage already done to wear down their prey. The target of my attack has withdrawn further than the others, playing extra defensive as it hisses and clacks at the surroundings, unsure where the hidden foe lies.

Gweheheheh.

Over here!

Once more I fire a burst at that centipede, splashing it squarely on the tail. The creature shrieks and squirms about, clacking fiercely as it attempts to locate my hiding place with its beady eyes.

No such luck, pinchy!

I normally wouldn't act so brazenly but with their hunt almost successful and the threat of surrounding monsters joining in, I doubt the centipedes would be so foolish as to abandon their prey to try and hunt for me.

So once again I nestle into the shadows and prepare to watch how things play out from the safety of the ceiling.

The croca-beast is heavily wounded now, air rasps between its massive jaws as it struggles for air. The eyes of the beast are still alive with fury however and the centipedes give due respect to their monstrous opponent and continue to wait it out, retreating slightly every time the beast steps forward.

My victim is moving slower now, clearly wounded. It refuses to back too far away from the croca-beast, but also remains close enough to claim its stake.

The croca is close to finished now, unable to put up much of a fight. Every breath is a labour at this point. Its blurry eyes lock onto its final target, the wounded centipede I have attacked.

Dash!

With the last of its strength the monster hurls itself forward, desperate to bring down even one more enemy as it goes. The wounded centipede darts to one side as the others once again close in on the beast from behind but the acid has burned away for too long.

The waiting game the centipedes played has weakened the croca significantly but it has also worked in my favour, allowing my acid to slowly burn and accrue damage.

It's just enough of a hindrance that the beast is able to land a vicious swipe with its claws.

Slash!

The centipede reels back from the blow but doesn't fall. Combine with the acid attacks from earlier, the centipede is clearly heavily wounded now.

This was the final burst of strength from the wounded croca, immediately after the furious attack, it collapses to the floor, spent of all its energy.

My heart pounds in my tiny ant thorax, this is perfect!

Once the unharmed centipedes close in on their prey to deliver the finishing blow I once again take aim. This is the last of my acid for the time being, this shot has to count!

Pow!

Once again my acid fires true, straight onto the wounded centipede.

My victim contorts its body as the hateful acid burns away at it once again.

For some reason I have very little sympathy for these clawed centipedes. Hopefully not just because they look so hideous, I like to think I'm not that shallow.

The two healthy centipedes turn to inspect their heavily wounded comrade before turning back to the now collapsed croca beast and finishing it off. As the large monster breathes its last breathe I tense slightly.

...

No system announcement.

I didn't receive any XP, even though I damaged it. This means that being part of a successful fight isn't enough, only the last blow matters!

[You have defeated Level 3 Unguibus Scolopendra]

[You have gained XP]

[You achieved Level 3, One skill point awarded]

Speaking of which! Even though the fearsome blow from the croca-beast surely dealt 80% of the damage to the centipede, I am the one who reaps the reward as my acid has claimed the final hit!

Muahahahahaha!!

The final two centipedes seem scarcely bothered by the loss of another ally. One of them immediately scuttles towards a nearby wall and darts into a side tunnel as the other centipede circles the beat carcass, clacking and hissing at the surroundings, defending the Biomass.

It isn't long before another five centipedes burst out into the main tunnel and quickly surround the prize. Once centipede even crawls over and seizes the remains of the one I defeated and starts dragging it back towards their nest!

Oi!

You dirty thief, I curse your father! I glare down at them from my hiding place on the roof.

[Stealth has reached level 5, upgrade available]

Oh ho! The great Gandalf has bestowed his wisdom upon mine head! So supple his facial hair! So aggressive his eyebrows!

I'll have to investigate this upgrade a little later. For now I must monitor this situation!

The centipedes move quickly to secure their hard won biomass, dragging away the croca-beast and also the body of the first centipede to perish in the battle. They really don't intend to waste anything, even to the point of consuming their own kind.....

This isn't really that odd if we consider normal insect behaviour. Some species will consume their own dead rather than let those precious nutrients go to

waste. This dungeon is a highly competitive environment after all, I can really blame them.

Still... As expected of these gross monsters.

They run a very slick operation though, I have to give them that. It doesn't take long for them to get their precious biomass back into their own side tunnel, safe from jealous eyes and the predations of their competition.

However...

If I had a proper mouth I would be grinning the sly grin of a scamming cat.

Foolish centipedes! Not as clever as you thought!!

Chuckling smugly within my mind I snake my way down a stone pillar, moving towards the remains of the centipede tossed away by the croca during the fight.

The final prize, is mine!