

## **'Stay close to me while I ride into combat' scenario (aka Hold my beer and watch this):**

1. Phulleigh uses a free action to command (a handle animal check) Sammy (an animal companion) to 'heel'. This results in a 'Readied action' (a move action) for Sammy. Don't make the handle animal check yet (doing so would constitute foreknowledge of an outcome).
  1. *Note that Phulleigh may have attempted a 'Fast Mount' maneuver (ref Ride skill, PH page 80) with DC 20, prior any commands issued during this 'ride into combat scenario'. If the DC 20 check was successful, then the Fast Mount maneuver is a free action. If the attempt is failed, then a move action is expended to mount the animal companion. It is also possible that Phulleigh was already mounted prior to any of the commands issued during this 'ride into combat scenario'.*
2. Phulleigh uses a free action to command (a ride check) Spencer (his war-trained animal companion/mount) to 'bear a rider (himself) into combat' (or a standard ride check).
  1. Phulleigh makes a handle animal check for Spencer (a free action). DC is 10 (modifiers may apply) to bear a rider into combat (No DC/roll required for a standard ride check).
    1. If the check is successful, Spencer moves - carrying Phulleigh into combat with the indicated enemy (a move action). Spencer can attack the opponent at the end of the move (a standard action), and Phulleigh still has a move and a standard action remaining (no move actions expended when Druid uses 'handle animal' on a Druid's animal companion - Ref Animal Companion 'Link' special ability; PH page 36).
    2. If the handle animal check fails, the DM decides whether Spencer doesn't move, or he moves but doesn't attack, or he moves toward a different enemy, or... The animal does something other than what the Druid/rider wanted.
3. After Spencer has moved and attacked, Phulleigh follows up with a standard action in order to 'fight with warhorse'
4. Phulleigh then makes his handle animal check (initially described in step one) to determine whether Sammy heels/follows (staying within 5 feet of Phulleigh).
  1. If Phulleigh's handle animal check succeeds, Sammy executes his readied action, to execute a move action in order to follow Phulleigh/Spencer. Sammy stays within 5 feet in order to continue sharing any spells (ref Druid's ability to share spells with animal companions, PH page 36). Since Sammy already used a move action to 'Ready an action' (see step 1), he only has one move available to follow Phulleigh (mounted on Spencer).
  2. If Phulleigh's check fails, Sammy does something other than following closely. This is up to the DM. Perhaps Sammy decides to attack an adjacent foe (where movement started), perhaps he moves but doesn't stay within 5 feet, perhaps he moves out of range, but ends the action with an attack against an opponent (i.e. he didn't actually 'ready' an action).
    1. *Note that Phulleigh may (if he has a move action remaining) attempt a 'Fast Dismount' maneuver (ref Ride skill, PH page 80) with DC 20, after the 'ride into combat scenario'. If the DC 20 check is*

*successful, then the Fast Dismount maneuver is a free action. If the attempt is failed, then a move action is expended to dismount from the animal companion.*

In this scenario, Sammy went first\*, using a move action to ready an action which may be triggered later during Phulleigh's turn (a character who executes a readied action may interrupt another character's actions). Spencer goes second, executing a move action in order to 'carry a rider into combat'. Spencer ends his action by using a standard action to attack the enemy. Finally, Phulleigh attacks the enemy. \*Unless of course Phulleigh's handle animal check failed, in which case Sammy actually goes last.

*Note: In accordance with the established house rules (ref RWHR page 33), animal companions (which includes pets, familiars, summoned creatures and even summoned magical forces (such as a spiritual weapon, magical vortex, etc) with a low intelligence (INT < 3)) normally take their turn/execute their actions before or after a controlling PC's (still within the controlling PC's initiative/turn).*

*The animal companion/familiar does not normally act in a manner that interrupts the controlling character's actions. The animal companion/familiar does not take its actions completely separate from the controlling character's actions (during someone else's turn).*

*A controlled animal companion/familiar normally acts immediately before or immediately after the controlling character's actions are done.*

*The actions of a controlled animal companion/familiar are handled in this manner to simplify combat actions and the execution of various actions during the round. As long as the actions of controlled animals/creatures are handled in this manner, there is no need to assign a separate initiative to them. Only creatures with an intelligence of 3 or higher need to roll for initiative, and they may (normally) act independently of the controlling character.*

*I will allow an animal companion/familiar to interrupt a controlling character's actions with a readied action, effectively shifting that animal companion's action so that they occur in a different order (before instead of after, after instead of before), but still during a controlling character's turn/initiative.*

*Using a readied action in this manner is consistent with the existing house rules, and will not necessitate the imposition of an initiative penalty upon the controlling character who's turn the animal companion/familiar acts upon.*

*This limited use of the readied action is an acceptable way to limit the potential confusion and abuses that could result from an unrestricted use of the readied action (use of readied action would allow the animal companion to act outside of the controlling character's turn/initiative order).*

*As long as the animal companion/familiar still acts during the controlling character's turn (acting immediately before or immediately after the actions of the controlling character), no penalty (other than the expenditure of a move action to ready an action) will be applied to the initiative of the controlling character.*

*Note also that D&D uses an initiative based/ordered approach to the execution of actions during a combat round. A combat round lasts only six seconds, but everyone has an opportunity to act in initiative order, from highest to lowest. While it might take us (players and DM) several minutes to adjudicate a single round of actions, the action itself all takes place during a very short period of time.*

Adjudicating the actions of multiple Animal Companions can get complicated. D&D is complicated enough for one character. With animal companions, you're essentially playing multiple characters.