

Intelligence Division • Case File

DEFENCE MASTERY

A Field Guide to Efficient 1-99 Training - Melee Mitigation Protocol



SUBJECT	Defence (1-99 progression)	SCOPE	Free-to-play and members-game methods, both routes shown separately; live game version, 2026.
ENTRY POINT	Level 1 Defence	TARGET	Level 99 Defence

Briefing. Defence shares its early and mid-game training spot with every other melee stat - only the combat style selection changes. **Nightmare Zone with Absorption (and optionally Overload) potions** is the flagship P2P endgame method: a semi-AFK loop good for 5–20 minutes away from keyboard per cycle depending on setup. Recalculated against the real xp table, the **P2P route runs roughly 140–245 hours** end to end (levels 70–99 alone hold ~94% of the skill's total xp). Free-to-Play accounts have no access to Sand Crabs or Nightmare Zone at all - the honest F2P route (Cows through Moss Giants) runs roughly **520–870 hours** and is broken out separately below.

Reading The Access Tags

Every tier in this dossier is tagged by account type, using the same color key across the entire Skill Mastery series: **F2P** marks a tier trainable on a Free-to-Play account, **P2P** marks a tier that requires membership, and **F2P & P2P** marks a tier identical on either account type. Defence has no shared tiers at all - Sand Crabs and Nightmare Zone are both members areas, so the F2P and P2P routes below never overlap.

PROGRESSION LADDER

 1 START	 40 SAND CRABS	 70 NMZ	 99 99
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ICON	TIER	LEVEL RANGE	METHOD	KEY REQUIREMENT
	I	1-40	Sand/Ammonite Crabs (Defensive)	None
	II	40-70	Continue Crabs + Bank NMZ Points	None (NMZ needs 5/43 quests to enter)
	III	70-99	Nightmare Zone (Defensive, Absorption + optional Overloads)	5 of 43 quests for NMZ entry

Reading The Access Tags

F2P Free-to-Play - no membership required for this method.

P2P Pay-to-Play - requires an active OSRS membership.

F2P & P2P Identical method works on either account type.

Field Note - No Assists Available (F2P)

F2P Defence has no equivalent to Sand Crabs or Nightmare Zone - both are members areas. The F2P tiers below run entirely on plain melee kills with **no potions, no Absorption, and no AFK multiplier**, so real-world hours run several times higher than the P2P tiers that follow. This is the same grinding ground used by the F2P Attack and Strength dossiers - only the combat style differs.

Field Note - Shared Training Ground (P2P)

Defence, Attack and Strength train at the **same physical spots** across this entire dossier - Sand Crabs early, Nightmare Zone late. Only the selected combat style differs, so switching between them mid-account costs nothing but a menu click.

F2P TIER A - COWS & AL KHARID SCORPIONS/WARRIORS

F2P

1 → 40

**METHOD**

Kill Cows (Lumbridge) then Al Kharid Scorpions/Warriors, Defensive combat style

LOCATION

Lumbridge cow field → Al Kharid

EST. TIME (THIS TIER)

~3-4 hrs

REQUIREMENTS

None

RATE

~10,000-15,000 xp/hr

Cheap and forgettable levels - low total xp requirement means this phase passes quickly even at a slow flat rate. Bank food if fighting Warriors.

F2P TIER B - HILL GIANTS → MOSS GIANTS

F2P

F2P CEILING

40 → 99

**METHOD**

Hill Giants (Edgeville Dungeon) until comfortable, then Moss Giants, Defensive style

LOCATION

Edgeville Dungeon (Hill Giants); Wilderness Moss Giant camp

EST. TIME (THIS TIER)

~520-870 hrs

REQUIREMENTS

None; Moss Giants sit in the Wilderness - PK risk applies

RATE

~15,000-25,000 xp/hr

This is the entire F2P endgame - there is no faster F2P Defence method past this point. The jump from a 40-55 hour P2P run to several hundred hours here is the single biggest reason serious Defence grinders eventually buy membership. Moss Giants carry real PK risk in the Wilderness; Hill Giants are safer if that's a dealbreaker.

TIER I - SAND / AMMONITE CRABS (DEFENSIVE)

P2P

1 → 40

**METHOD**

Sand Crabs or Ammonite Crabs, Defensive combat style

LOCATION

Hosidius (Sand Crabs, Kourend) or Fossil Island (Ammonite Crabs)

EST. TIME (THIS TIER)

~2-5 hrs

REQUIREMENTS

Members world (both spots sit in members areas). Sand Crabs need no quest; Ammonite Crabs need the short **Bone Voyage** quest for Fossil Island boat access.

RATE

~8,000-20,000 xp/hr (real-world rate ramps with level and weapon tier)

Identical spot to the Attack and Strength dossiers. Selecting a single combat style (Defensive here, vs. Accurate/Aggressive for Attack/Strength) doesn't itself slow down kills on a target this weak - all three route the same full-rate xp to a different stat, rather than Defensive being an inherently slower option; older guides describing a defensive penalty are usually describing the *Controlled* style, which splits xp three ways at a reduced rate, not single-style Defensive. Total xp needed for levels 1-40 is only ~37,000, so this tier passes quickly regardless of exact rate.

TIER II - CONTINUE CRABS, BANK NMZ POINTS

P2P

40 → 70

**METHOD**

Same crab spot, Defensive style; run easy Nightmare Zone bosses on the side

LOCATION

Same crab spot + Nightmare Zone instance

EST. TIME (THIS TIER)

~16-35 hrs

REQUIREMENTS

None (NMZ points are an optional side-goal)

RATE

~20,000-45,000 xp/hr (weapon-tier dependent)

There's no one-time "unlock" for Absorption - reward points are a running currency spent continuously at Dom Onion's Reward Shop (1,000 points per dose, 4,000 for a full potion). This tier's real goal is banking a comfortable points buffer for Tier III. Nightmare Zone itself requires **5 of 43 eligible quests completed** to enter - confirm this is already done.

TIER III - NIGHTMARE ZONE (DEFENSIVE)

P2P



METHOD

1 HP + Absorption potions on easy melee bosses (Rock Golem etc.), Defensive attack style; Overloads optional for points income

LOCATION

Nightmare Zone instance

EST. TIME (THIS TIER)

~123-205 hrs

REQUIREMENTS

Entry: 5 of 43 eligible quests completed. No stat/skill requirement to buy Absorption (1,000 pts/dose) or Overload (1,500 pts/dose) - just banked points and 51+ HP to safely drink an Overload.

RATE

~60,000-100,000 xp/hr (approximate, community-sourced)

Levels 70-99 alone need ~12.3 million xp (~94% of the whole skill!), which is why this single tier dominates the total time. AFK cycle length is potion-dependent: **Absorption alone** (no Overload) allows up to ~20 minutes away from keyboard; adding **Overloads** shortens that to ~5 minutes per cycle in exchange for far higher points income (~250k points/hr on hard rumble) - a tradeoff, not a straightforward xp upgrade.

✓ QUICK-REFERENCE RECAP

Combined Estimate

P2P end to end: a full 1-99 Defence run via Crabs + Nightmare Zone totals roughly **140-245 hours** once each tier is reconciled against the real xp table (levels 70-99 alone hold ~94% of the skill's total xp, so Nightmare Zone dominates the total). F2P end to end: the Cows/Giants route totals roughly **520-870 hours** with no potions or AFK assist - by far the largest F2P/P2P gap of any melee stat, driven almost entirely by the Moss Giant endgame phase.

Field Note - Why Train Defence At All

Many combat builds deliberately skip Defence early since it doesn't add damage - but higher Defence unlocks better armour and meaningfully reduces incoming damage, which pays for itself at higher-tier PvM content. Nightmare Zone conveniently levels Defence at the same semi-AFK rate as any other combat style, so there's little reason not to just points-farm it here.

Switching From F2P To P2P Mid-Grind

Xp earned under either route counts identically toward the same level - there's no penalty for starting on the F2P Cows/Giants route and buying membership later. Most players who grind past level 40-50 on F2P Defence end up switching the moment membership becomes affordable, given the multi-hundred-hour gap to the P2P endgame.

ICON	TIER	LEVEL RANGE	REQUIREMENT	LOCATION	RATE (XP/HR)	EST. TIME
	F2P A - Cows & Al Kharid	1-40	None	Lumbridge / Al Kharid	~10-15k	~3-4 hrs
	F2P B - Hill Giants → Moss Giants	40-99	None (Wilderness PK risk)	Edgeville Dungeon / Wilderness	~15-25k	~520-870 hrs
	P2P I - Sand/Ammonite Crabs (Def)	1-40	Members world	Hosidius / Fossil Island	~8-20k	~2-5 hrs
	P2P II - Crabs + NMZ Point Banking	40-70	Members world	Same crab spot	~20-45k	~16-35 hrs
	P2P III - Nightmare Zone (Def, semi-AFK)	70-99	5/43 quests for NMZ entry	Nightmare Zone	~60-100k	~123-205 hrs

All figures approximate. In-game xp rates, minigame rewards, and item prices fluctuate and were sourced from the OSRS Wiki and community efficiency guides current as of early September 2026. This dossier assumes full game access unless noted otherwise. Always confirm current mechanics in-game before committing to a specific Defence method.

- OSRS Wiki - Defence training
- OSRS Wiki - Sand crab
- OSRS Wiki - Ammonite crab
- OSRS Wiki - Nightmare Zone
- OSRS Wiki - Dom Onion's Reward Shop
- OSRS Wiki - Hill giant
- OSRS Wiki - Moss giant