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**EVERY rule is only the default rule -
if contradictory, always trust the text on the CARD**

This rulebook is also available at:
<https://deckofmanydungeons.com/rules>

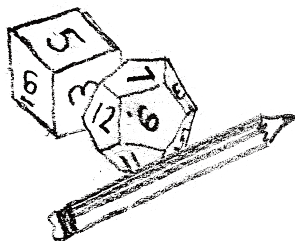
INTRODUCTION

What's a Role-Playing Game?

An RPG is a game where the **players work together** to solve problems and **tell a story**. One person becomes the Game Master (or **GM**). This person's job is to describe situations, work with the players to determine the outcome of their actions, and decide the reactions of various people and creatures. Everyone else is a player and controls one thing only: the actions of their own Player Character (or **PC**).

Part of the fun of **role-playing** can be getting to act out personality traits which differ from your own. Play a fantasy version of yourself, your exact opposite, or anything in between.

Another part of the fun is the **fictional world**, where magic is possible and challenges abound. You might help a noble win the attention of a foreign prince, or kill the dragon that's been terrorizing the Coldlands. The GM should focus the story in whichever direction most interests the players. The only thing that's important here is having fun!



Basics of Play

Your group's first task is to select who is the **Game Master**. This is the person who will plan the games and describe the situation to the players. There are other, amazing resources out there for being a good GM, but try to select someone who: understands the rules reasonably well; has some spare time to plan out an over-arching story for your sessions; is comfortable with some degree of improvisation (as players tend to do the unexpected and ideally the game doesn't grind to a halt when they do); and most importantly, can put the enjoyment of the group-as-a-whole over their own ego or sense of control.

For much of each session, the players will simply describe actions that they want their characters to perform, and the GM will **describe the natural consequences** of those actions based on how the world works and how the Non-Player Characters (NPCs, controlled by the GM) would naturally react given their traits and goals - with some leeway for fun & adventure versus realism. No no cards necessary, nor dice or maps, just your imaginations.

The **rules in this book** only come into play in a few situations: 1) The players want to do something that presents a challenge with an uncertain outcome. Simple tasks don't require rules or dice, but **if failure is interesting**, ask for a Task check. 2) A **combat** breaks out. The special combat rules let players use their card abilities to feel powerful and cool. 3) **Characters are injured**. The system tells you how much injury you can take before falling unconscious, and how those injuries heal. And 4) The **session ends**, XP is doled out, and players become stronger / more skilled by levelling up.

THE WORLD OF KOREGARD

Introduction



Koregard has long been a dangerous place: wolves in the wilderness, dragons in the skies, and the savage goblin races ever swelling in numbers. A decade-long war with the coastal fiefdoms has taken a further toll on the populace. Now, Verdanian has gathered its resources to fund a **disparate selection of would-be heroes**. Their task is to keep dangerous creatures at bay and do so as visibly and helpfully as possible to show Koregard's citizens that life is returning to normal. All too soon, however, dangerous secrets will be uncovered and these untried adventurers will have to **decide the fate of the empire**.

Note: These rules can be used with other fantasy settings if you so desire. That said, this setting has most familiar elements as well as a few unique extras.

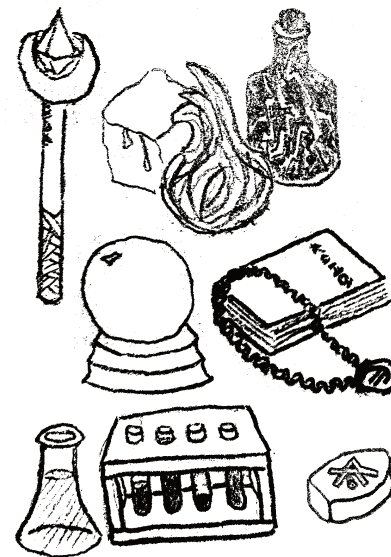
Magic

At its core, Koregard is medieval fantasy. Technologically the world is where Earth was at the height of the middle ages: horses, swords and shields, and outhouses. But there is also magic - just as real and reliable as gravity. Where scientific principles are constant whether or not someone is there to observe, magic requires a participant, exerting their will. Each form of magic functions differently and produces distinct results. Each also takes as much time and discipline to master as a weapon or trade, so most practitioners only know one or two types.

Mages use complicated calculations to alter the nature of reality. They are able to affect time and space and even shape pure energy.

Conduits forge connections with the primal dimensions. They generate and direct fundamental natural forces, such as fire or wind, to greatly hinder their foes.

Oracles channel Divine forces into blessings. With this magic they alter probabilities, see visions of the future, and heal, protect, and inspire others.



Less well-understood types of magic include: **Alchemists**, who distill enchantments into drinkable form. **Druids**, who bond with a creature of the world, and gain some characteristics of that creature. **Faewalkers**, who can tap into other dimensions to create short-lived illusions or transmutations. And **Necromancers**, who funnel their souls into dark magic in order to sidestep death for themselves and their mindless servants.

People of the World

Humans aren't alone on Koregard: they live alongside elves, dwarves, haufins, and a selection of other less common races. Most of these peoples are on good terms with each other, trading goods and living together in large cities. Conflict tends more to political than racial differences. While individuals often fall outside the typical, some generalizations can be made:

Avars are winged folk that prefer natural, often remote areas. They lack hands, but make up for it with cleverness and determination. They are widely considered to be honourable and courageous, if a bit capricious.

Carnufians are passionate and curious. They have strong resemblance to various mammals (tigers, bears, wolves, badgers). Depending on their lineage they may have innate traits such as claws, good eyesight, or hardiness.

Dwarves are short and sturdy, taciturn and brave. They frequently live in the mountains and are famous for their work with stone and metal.

Elves are usually tall and slender. They tend to be graceful and over their extremely long lives can become very knowledgeable, but because of this they are frequently disdainful of others.

Giants are a careful, peaceful people. Too large to use furniture or the like made for the other races, they venture into cities infrequently. However they love to learn and to travel and are not an uncommon sight on the road.

Hauflins are a friendly folk: loyal, hardworking, and quick on their feet. Hauflin commerce is largely responsible for the Common language as well as the current peace in the realm. Some call them "halfings" for their stature.

Humans are known to be driven and inventive. They are relatively short-lived but quick-thinking and versatile, usually attempting to master one profession while also dabbling in several complementary topics.

Rumids are long-lived and possessive of their ancient knowledge. They have antlers and hooved feet and are nimble when they need to be, but are rarely moved to action. They are seen as easygoing and dependable.



Current Events

In days past, Koregard was **one united land**, ruled by an Emperor from the throne in the capital. But since the late 1400s the land had been fracturing. The Coldlands were becoming more independent, and the Coastal Fiefdoms became divided from the empire and also from each other. Only **Verdania** - the collection of fiefs in the center of the continent - did not chafe under the Emperor's rule.

It was in this environment **Emperor Farrin** and his family were killed. Farrin's younger brother Tarwin dealt with the guilty and took the throne, but he had two other major problems: First, he was **childless**, a situation that could lead to civil war. He found a young new wife, **Saia**, who produced a daughter in 1612 and a son in 1617 - but not before the second problem came about. The coastal fiefdoms began to rebel, and soon after declared **outright war**.

War raged for **twelve years** - until 1623, when the fiefdoms finally decided to take the settlements they had been offered. Now **the Fiefdoms** are each ruled by a Lord with **no ties** to the rest of Koregard, and no fiefdom held above the others. The **Coldlands** were named a **separate Kingdom**. The game starts shortly after the end of the war. **Resentment thrives**. Queen Saia (who has quietly stepped up for her now reclusive husband, King Tarwin) is determined to **repair relations** if at all possible, but the players will have to **prove themselves** before being entrusted to help with this cause.

More Information

Should you want it, a wealth of **further setting detail** can be found at: deckofmanydungeons.com/wiki

Adventure Modules

We also have many adventure modules (with maps, NPCs, and special enemies) available **free** at <http://deckofmanydungeons.com/modules>. Some are meant to stand alone, and play out over one session. Others are best played over many sessions, mixed in to your regular play. Here's a taste of the quest lines we have:

Tarwin's Legacy: A large-scale and long-term campaign. The royal family has some intrigue hidden just below the surface, and as the players gain the trust of key players they will make choices that shape the legacy left by King Tarwin.

The Goblinic Accords: There is much that is not yet understood about goblinoids. Depending on their actions, the players may encounter friendly goblins and even entirely change the way the world deals with the goblinic races.

GETTING STARTED

Game Contents

This DEMO copy is for play at level 1 only. It has 228 cards and no dividers, but is pre-sorted.

Please refer to the “Anatomy of a Card” spread on the next 2 pages for help identifying the different parts of a card that are referenced here.

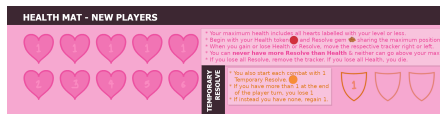
In addition to this rule-book, your game box should have come with:

- 15 **Divider** cards. It is recommended that before play, you sort and divide the poker cards to sit within these partitions, with the dividers first. (If the divider goes after, it hides every time you take out all the cards.) Later bullet points will cover each division in detail.

Note: The division tells you which cards are available to players, but does not affect the actual operation of the card. In other words: once the card is in your hand, you can ignore its source. Also, Tier for Support and Enemy cards is not a limit, but a guide. GMs are encouraged to use higher-Tier Support and Enemy cards sparingly at first, and more often as the players grow more powerful.

- Health tracker** mats. 3 types, each with different fronts and backs:

→ 6 **Player** mats. One side has helpful rules notes and will last you up to level 8. The other side lasts to level 20.



→ 2 **Enemy** mats. These have 3 sets of hearts, so the GM can track 3 enemies per card. The opposite side is for Boss enemies.

→ 1 **Follower** mat. The other side is meant for enemy Followers, but it's largely interchangeable with a regular Enemy mat.

- 6 Player **Resolve** (orange diamond)
- 6 Player **Health** (red circle)
- 6 Player **Temporary Resolve** (orange circle)
- 6 Enemy **Resolve** (orange diamond)
- 6 Enemy **Health** (red circle)
- 2 Enemy **Temporary Resolve** (orange circle)
- 3 Follower **Health** (orange circle)

Accessibility Note: The colour of these tokens doesn't really matter. Only the track they're on matters.

- 180 **Talent** cards. For each of 3 Tiers:

→ 16 **Race** cards (4 for each of Dwarf, Elf, Hauffin, and Human)

→ 30 **Class** cards (5 for each of Assassin, Brute, Conduit, Knight, Mage, and Oracle)

→ 14 **Skill** cards (2 for each of 7 skills)

- 24 **Trait** cards

- 147 **Gear** cards. For each of 3 Tiers:

→ 25 **Held** items (11 melee weapons, 5 magic weapons, 1 longbow, 3 healing talismans, 2 shields, 2 stones, 1 tome)

→ 4 each of Chainmail, Leather **Armour**, and Plate Mail

→ 4 each of Running, Light, and Sturdy **Boots**



- 37 **Support** cards (8 Followers, 2 NPCs, 27 Enchantments)



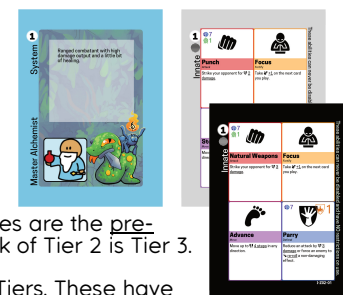
- 58 **Enemy** cards (1 Beast, 7 Critter, 4 Dragon, 8 Goblinoid, 9 Humanoid, 20 Modifiers, 9 Hazards)

- 26 **System** cards. Unlike other cards, many of these are 2-sided and thus have no back. All such cards are **System** cards.



→ 6 **quick-rules** cards for players and a different one for the GM

→ 7 **adventure generation** cards (see “Generating Adventures”)



→ 12 **Innate** cards (for Tiers 1 and 2). There are 3 variations of these, and every player should choose one. They contain abilities that can never be disabled and - unlike every other action - may be repeated within a turn.

→ On the back side of the Tier 1 Innates are the **pre-made** character descriptions. The back of Tier 2 is Tier 3.

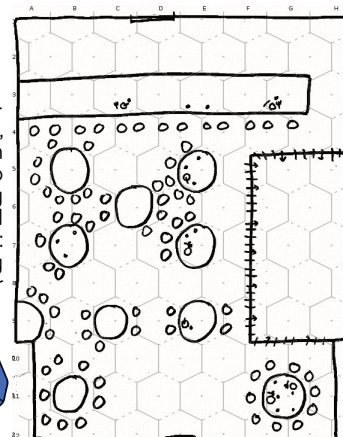
→ 1 **Enemy Innate** card for each of 3 Tiers. These have slightly different abilities than the player versions.

- The “Characters”, “Session Plan”, and “Miscellaneous” dividers will begin empty. They are intended to help the GM to organize their players (PC character cards) and sessions (enemies the players are likely to encounter, rewards they might gain, and NPCs they might meet) for up to two different groups.

Other Tools



You will need **maps** (either a hex-grid mat with dry erase markers, or printed pages), along with **figurines** or other tokens, to track player and enemy locations in combat. You will also need **dice** of various sides: 4, 6, 8, 10, and 12. Ideally, every player and the GM would have their own set, but the dice can be shared.

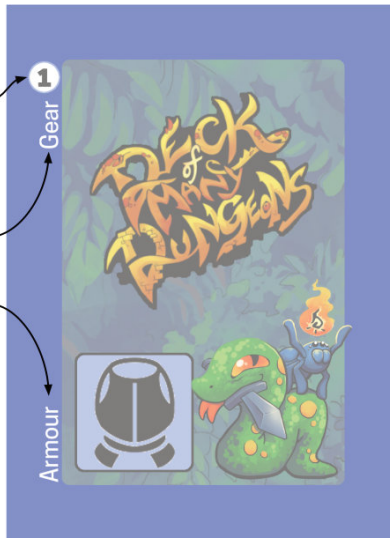


Anatomy of a Card

Tier: At first you will only have Tier 1 cards. As you progress through play, you can “level up” individual cards to as high as Tier 6.

Partition

Deck



Cost: Some abilities cost Resolve to perform. More information on Resolve later, but essentially it is a spendable portion of your health. This icon indicates that you must spend that much Resolve in order to attempt the action.

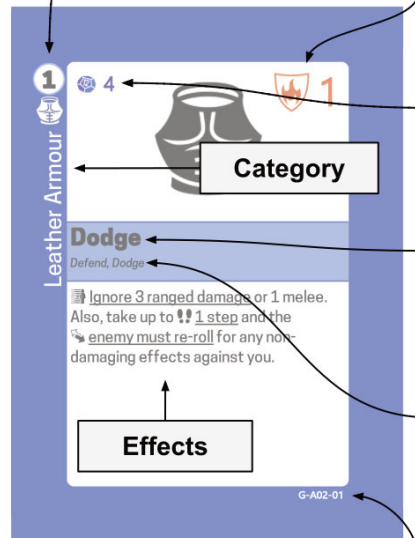
Roll: If you see this symbol, then you will need to roll this number or higher on a 12-sided die in order for the card effects to occur.

Category

Title

Tags: Important qualities of the card. For example, a card might grant a bonus to hit with Large weapons or to defend vs Block damage. The bonus would apply if the tags include “Large” or “Block”.

Effects



ID: Uniquely identifies the card. Useful to ask for rules clarification or to track which cards are part of your character so that you can play the game with a different group. It is:

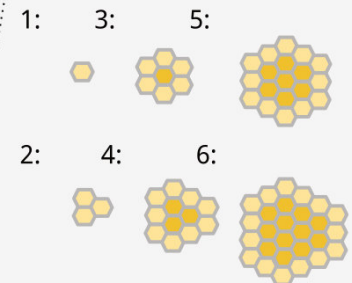
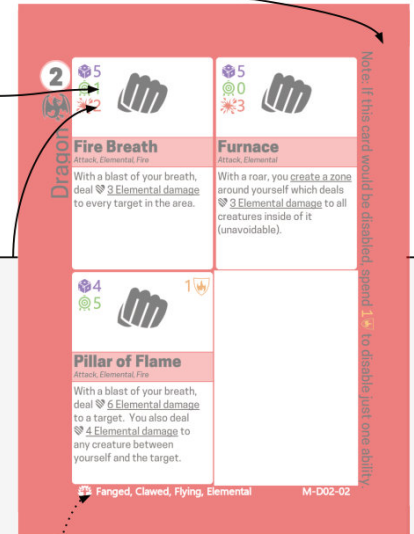
Category + Subcategory + Arbitrary ID + Tier

Some cards are a **collection** of abilities. Some collections may have special rules written along the right-hand side. If a rule or effect specifies something to happen to a **card** (e.g. disabling), then it refers to the whole card (although many collections have special rules here which affect certain situations). Conversely, if a rule or effect refers to an **action** or **ability**, e.g. that you cannot do the same action twice in one turn, then it refers to the separate abilities.

Range: This shows how far away you can place the effect. Range 0 is your own space. Otherwise, count connecting spaces on the map, with 1 (or no value) being adjacent to you, until you reach this number.

Area: Indicates how many spaces you can affect. Roll once and include every target (or only enemies or only allies, if the ability indicates as such) within spaces on the board in a shape defined as follows (you choose the placement of the shape, but at least one space in the shape must be within the range of the ability:

- Area 1 (or none) is 1 space, and each odd-numbered area (3, 5, etc) adds all the touching hexes from the previous area.
- Area 2 is a triangle of 3 hexes, and even areas (4, 6, etc) increase similarly from there.



On enemy cards, this area is used to indicate recommended **Modifier** cards to be included with the enemy's abilities. On player and follower cards, it's used to indicate categories of **Tasks** to which the card can be applied.

Creating A Character

- If you want to jump into the game with a simple, **pre-made** character, skip ahead to “Using Pre-made Characters” instead.
- If this is your **very first game**, we have a “level zero” option that is a little easier to jump into (see sidebar).
- If this is a **new campaign** for experienced players, start at level 1. You'll have just enough cards to create most concepts out of the gate.

In all cases, use **Tier 1 cards by default**. (Starting with Tier 2 or even higher is a quick way to jump into a high-powered game – but of course there will be less room to grow.) You may also want to **check out the opposite page** for a summary of your various options.

Talents

Choose **5 Talent cards**. The make-up of these can be quite flexible within these limits:

- At least 1 race card, but not more than 2 *different* races (e.g. 2 Dwarf cards and an Elf card is completely valid).
- At least 1 class card, but not more than 2 *different* classes (see above example).
- Any number of skills. (Well, from 0 to 3).

Gear

Now pick out your starting gear. You get all of the following:

- One card for your **armour**
- One card for your **boots**
- One or two **Held** items

You may assign your “main” and “off” hands: either by using both to hold a “2-Handed” item, or holding an item in each hand. If you have two items, they can be different for flexibility, or the same to allow repeat actions. You will only be able to use the actions on the card which match the way you are wielding it – but most Held items have a **main action** and a **stronger version** with a Resolve cost for each method of wielding.

Finishing Touches

Finally, complete steps 4-6 from “Using Pre-made Characters” (next pages): **Traits**, **Health** tracker, an **Innate** card of your choice, and a **name/backstory**.

Level 0:

For players on their very first session, we recommend the following substitutions:

- Choose 3 **Talents**, and you may leave out race or class cards as needed.
- Take any 2 **gear** cards (armour, boots, or held) OR a 2-handed weapon.
- Complete the “Finishing Touches” step (**traits**, etc) as normal.

With “Level 0” your players will have fewer options available to them, but it will help ease them into things. Switch to level 1 for the second game, and then start giving them XP.

Quick Reference

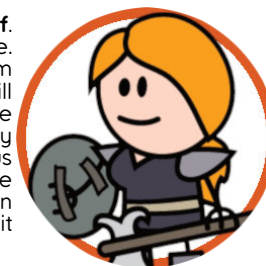
Here are some short notes on your various choices to help speed things up:

Races:	Held Items:	Armour:
Human: Versatile Elf: Nimble Dwarf: Sturdy Hauflin: Small <i>(more races will be made playable in expansions)</i>	Axe: Attacks two enemies Dagger: Pierces armour Hammer: High damage, stun Short Sword: Easy to use Bow: High range, multi-enemy Shuriken: Medium range, reliable Gilded Sceptre: Short range, high area Oak Staff: Short range, reliable, area Crystal Rod: High damage, range Orb of Healing: Focussed healing Healing Staff: Flexible heal/attack Ancient Tome: Reduced magic cost Soothing Stone: Self healing Haste Stone: Better defense Buckler: Versatile defense Kite Shield: Melee defense	Leather: Better at range Chainmail: Versatile Plate Mail: Better in melee Boots: Light Boots: Basic Running Boots: Faster, riskier Steady Boots: Slower, consistent



Character Examples – Garn

Paul wants to make a **stealthy axe-wielding dwarf**. Assassin is the best class for stealth, so he begins there. But all of the Assassin cards look good, so he sets them to the side for now. He can't take all 5 since he will need at least one card for his race, but he can decide later. He looks at the **Dwarf** cards and starts actually making choices. Hefty Swing would give him a bonus to hit with his axes... but he's more interested in the extra damage that he can get from Heavy Blow, even though that card will cost Resolve to use. He takes it and puts the others back.



Paul considers that if he wants high-damage he might **multi-class** by taking a Brute card or two. But he feels more strongly about being fast and stealthy, so decides against it. He can always pick up a second class after levelling up.

Now Paul looks through the **Skill** cards. He decides that he really wants Saw It Coming. In addition to the active ability, it will also boost his Intuition and Notice, skills that he wants his character to be good at. That will leave just 3 cards for his **class**. He looks over his 5 choices again. Twin Strike is only useful if he is going to dual-wield. Two axes would let him use an Attack from each on any given turn, but again he's looking at damage and decides to wield one big axe with both hands – the rightmost actions on the Battle Axe. Paul drops Twin Strike and Smoke Bomb. He has his 5 Talents and his Hand item, which just leaves Armour, Boots, Traits, and a name.

Heavy Blow Boost Boost: One non-magical attack action. Deal ⚔️ +1 damage and if you hit, one target of your choice misses an action next turn.	Saw It Coming Passive Once per turn, when an enemy tries to use a passive ability on/against you, Intuition, Memory, Cunning, Notice	Quick Passive Get ⚔️ +1 to Dodge, but at the cost of a ⚔️ -2 penalty to use Shields and Plate Mail.
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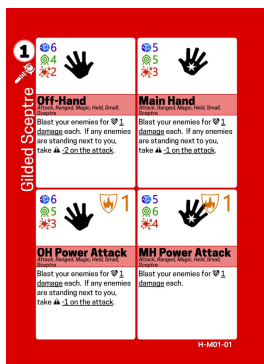
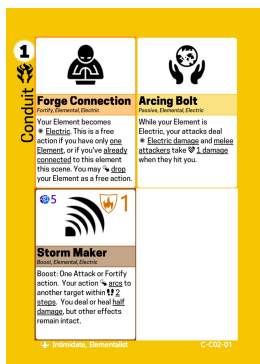
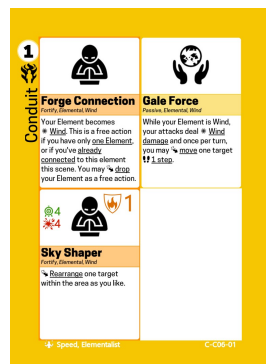
Paul chooses Leather armour and Running boots, then looks through his options for Traits. His character's personality is beginning to gel in his mind, so he chooses Confident and Cheerful to fit that personality. He can take a 3rd if he likes, but decides not to. He names his character **Garn Axegrind**.

Character Examples - Jai

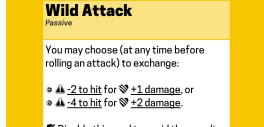
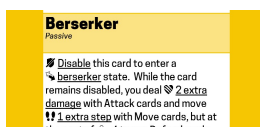
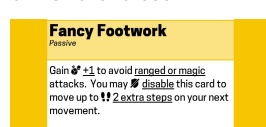
Jo is already picturing Jai Stormeater, a powerful warrior-mage. But she isn't sure yet which 2 classes to choose between Mage, Conduit, and Brute, and hasn't decided on her race yet, either.

Looking over her class choices, Jo decides that **pure power and elemental magic** are more important to her than the various options she could get from Mage, so she decides on hybrid Conduit / Brute for her class.

Jo considers the elemental options from **Conduit**. If she sticks to just one, then she will always have that element active, but if she wants more options then she'll have to spend an action to connect with each element before she can access its passive in battle. Jo prefers to have more options, and chooses Wind (Gale Force and Sky Shaper) and Electric (Arcing Bolt and Storm Maker).



Jo moves to her **racial options**. With nothing particular in mind, she goes through all of them. She is most interested in the elf's Fancy Footwork and the haufin's Small and Small Hands cards. Jai can be half-elf and half-haufin – she could even have all three of these cards – but she doesn't want to give up either of her Conduit choices and she's still quite interested in the cards from Brute. In the end, she decides to be just an elf, even though she is closing off her ability to choose haufin cards later (race can't be changed as easily as class). She goes with Fancy Footwork, and Berserker & Wild Attack from Brute. She doesn't even look at the Skill cards as she knows she won't want to replace any of her 5 choices.



Jo equips Jai with two **Gilded Sceptres** (multi-attack for the win!) and Plate mail and Light boots. Even though her sceptres will mean she can hit enemies at range, she wants to be able to wade right into the melee. Fancy Footwork and Plate mail between them give her enough defensive capacity that she can just stand in one place and blast her enemies to pieces.

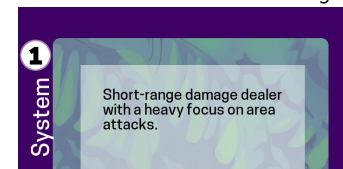
With only **traits** left to choose, Jo quickly picks Fierce and Passionate. She goes over the other options again and decides to also take Creative, which she expects will help whenever she wants to use her elemental magic to solve problems out-of-combat.

Using Pre-made Characters

The DoMD comes with 12 pre-made characters so that you can jump into the game faster, if you like. If you want to create your own character, skip this section. To play with one of the included characters, follow these steps:

(You may need to reference “Anatomy of a Card” in order to find the cards you need).

- Find the 12 player Innate cards and flip them over. Have everyone read the short descriptions so that each player may find one of interest.



Level 0: If this is your very first game, we have a “level zero” option that is a little easier to jump into. Normally you would select all Tier 1 cards in step 2 with your character; to play at level 0, select only the ones with a 0 (e.g. Combat Mage 0”).

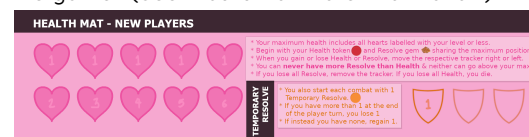
- Collect the **Talents & Gear** cards. On the lower right of most of these cards you will see the **name & colour** of a pre-made character (to match the back of the card you chose in step 1). Go through the deck (you might want to rotate it first) and pick out every card marked for your character.



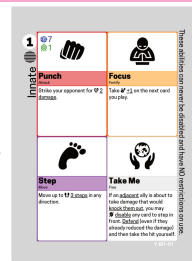
You will have 5 Talent cards which tell you your **race** (or races, indicating mixed heritage), **class** (you might be multi-class), and special **skills** (each card has a skill list, but cards with this designation have more than most). You will also have 1-2 **held** items, 1 **armour**, and 1 **boots**.

- At the discretion of the GM, changes can be made. If one player really wants to swap out an ability card, or the group needs somebody equipped with a healing talisman, go for it.

- Now find the **Traits** cards. Each player should pick 2-3 personality traits that they are interested in role-playing for their character. You're free (even encouraged) to have other personality quirks, but these Traits will give you a bonus for certain rolls in the game. (See “Tasks” for more information.)



- Take a **Health tracker**, a quick-rules card, and the **Innate** card with your chosen character on the back.
- Come up with a **name** for your character. You are also encouraged, but not required, to have some ideas about their past, their appearance, their goals, their station in life, etc. The more fleshed-out your character is, the more fun it will be to play them.



PLAYING THE GAME: TASKS

During the course of a game, players will want to do lots of things that aren't covered directly by their cards. Jumping chasms, casting spells within their class' domain, puzzling their way through a labyrinth... these are Tasks. Most actions outside of combat (e.g. walking, opening a door) require no roll, but if the outcome is uncertain and **failure is interesting**, then the task will have a **difficulty** set by the GM. This is usually between 1 and 12, but may be higher:

- 1 Routine task, no roll required.
- 3 Simple, but requires some luck or skill.
- 6 Obtainable with great competence.
- 9 Challenging even for a master.
- 13 Herculean effort and proficiency.

Categories

Speed
Balance
Deftness
Might
Endurance

Intuition
Memory
Cunning
Notice
Examine

Bluff
Persuade
Intimidate
Willpower

Arcanist
Elementalist
Religion

Sneak
Nature
Devices
Group Tasks



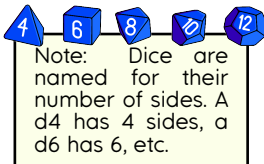
The GM now selects **one or more Categories** ---> for the task (see sidebar). The category is important because usually the GM will either 1) allow **any of several** skill categories to be used interchangeably, or 2) **change the difficulty** of the roll depending on the category used. For example, using Persuade vs Intimidate indicates an approach to a conversation that may impact the feasibility and also the outcome. But a GM can get creative in setting the category and difficulty in order to best represent the problem at hand - see the right-hand page for examples.

The player can **apply cards** toward the task. Check the **bottom of the card** for the categories that the card should be automatically eligible to help with. For balance reasons some of these suggestions may not be obvious, but if **any of these fit**, it should count.

Players may also **suggest cards** that they think are relevant. It is recommended to allow these if the Category, Title, or Effects make sense for what the player is doing & how they are doing it.

As the **main purpose of Traits** is to help with Tasks, allow them as long as the player is acting to the trait and it's at least a little relevant. e.g. Patient doesn't include Willpower in its list, but it only makes sense that it should help with a drawn-out contest of wills. Also, if you disable a Trait card (as described below), you don't stop having that Trait. You just don't get to use it again for a mechanical advantage until after it's been re-enabled.

By default, the player rolls a **d4**. For up to 4 applicable cards, either 1) **upgrade** the die: $d4 > d6 > d8 > d10 > d12$ or 2) (if currently enabled) **disable** it for a flat **+2** on the roll. Recall that you can re-enable with Resolve, or for Traits simply by enacting them. The decision to upgrade or disable must be made **before you roll**.



Tasks in combat take an action, so these should generally have a lower difficulty, rarely above 6. This offsets the action cost and encourages cleverness. Note that the **d12 roll for cards usage** (see "Player Turn") already assumes you are fully competent in that ability, and is not subject to these rules.



Tasks may sometimes be **opposed**, in which case the difficulty is replaced by a Task roll of the person opposing, e.g. one person rolls to hold someone and the other rolls to escape. In this case a tie would mean the situation doesn't change.

Other players may **aid**. In a group action, players boost dice and roll separately, but disabled cards boost all rolls and the highest total result is the one used. Aiding would take an action from each contributing player.

Cards that are **disabled** do not grant effects (except 1: effects that specifically happen upon disabling and 2: **Flaw** effects) until the card is re-enabled.

Task Examples



Jai is trying to **get into a barricaded room**. She can't see inside, but she knows that the occupants have pushed something up against the door. She wants to use her command of Wind magic to push the items to the side so that the door can open inward.

This is obviously an **Elementalist** task, though the GM has significant leeway to allow other cards. In this case, the GM decides that because the items are very heavy, Jai will face an increased difficulty **but** may include up to one **Willpower** card. This sort of category combination isn't necessary - she could just call it Elementalist and go from there - but she feels that it fits the situation and adds to the fun. She sets a difficulty of 7 and explains that upon failure, Jai's quarry will escape further into the keep.

Jai has Elemental from each of her two Conduit cards, and Willpower from Wild Attack. That moves her starting d4 up 3 times, to d10. She expects a combat soon after breaking through the door so she hesitates to disable any of her combat cards, but she's still got 3 traits. She makes the case that Fierce should apply here, given the willpower component of the spell. The GM accepts. Jai will roll $d10 + 2$ vs a difficulty of 7.

Jo rolls a 5 on the die. With her +2 from disabling Fierce, that's a success!



Garn wants to **sneak into an enemy camp** and set some traps. This could be two separate Task checks, but the GM decides to make it one, since a failed outcome would be the same in both cases - someone raises the alarm and combat begins with Garn separated from her companions.

The GM's decision is that **Sneak** (not raising a racket) and **Devices** (setting the traps) will both be required, and that **Deftness** can be used as well. The difficulty will be 9. This presents a problem for Garn, who has Sneak but no Devices. The plan is saved when an ally with Fast Talk (which includes Devices) convinces the GM that he can talk Garn through it before she goes. The GM enjoys the creativity of the plan and allows it, but Fast Talk will have to be disabled in order to boost Garn's roll.

Garn can use Shadow Strike because of Sneak and Deftness, and Quick and Flanker for Deftness. With the aid of her ally, this would give her $d10 + 2$ vs 9. Garn's player **Paul** doesn't like those odds, but all of Garn's Traits are already disabled and he is low on Resolve to enable them. Paul can disable any or all of the applicable combat cards, though. For each one his die will no longer be stepped up, but he'd gain a flat +2 instead - so he'd need 7 on a d10, or 5 on a d8 ($d8 + 4$), or 3 on a d6 (a 50% chance)... or 1 on a d4. He decides not to take any risks, and disables all 4 cards for automatic success.

HEALTH AND RESOLVE

The front of each **health tracker card** has 12 hearts aka Health and can be used up to level 6. At level 1, you start each session with **5 Health and 5 Resolve**. These both increase by one every time you gain a level. The numbers on the hearts are used to remind you how many you have at each level. (At level 7, flip to the back side of the tracker. At that point, you also switch to the Tier 2 Innate abilities card.)

Each player should have this health tracker, an orange gem to track their Resolve, a red token to track their health, and an orange token (more on this last one shortly). **When you begin play**, set the red token on the rightmost heart labelled with your level. This is your current Health. Next set the orange gem on top of it. This is your current Resolve.



Resolve is like bonus, **spendable hitpoints**. During the game you may gain and lose both. But your Health can never go lower than your Resolve.

When you **take damage**, you can choose for each point of damage whether to **lose Health** (move the token to the left) or **Resolve** (move the gem to the left) – but you cannot choose to lose Health if doing so would put it lower than your Resolve. When you **gain Health**, move the token to the right by the amount gained (but not further than your maximum). When you **gain Resolve**, move the gem to the right by the amount gained (but not further than your health).

If **all of your Health is lost**, then you are unconscious and out of the fight. If you are revived by an ally, then you will be instructed to heal by some amount at that time. If you are knocked out and revived, you can only act during that player turn if you have not already acted that turn (ie, you cannot act, die, revive, and then act again). Losing all of your Resolve is less dire: just take the gem off of the track until you regain some.

You also have **Temporary Resolve** which represents increased adrenaline during combat. This is the orange token. You start every combat with 1. Most of the time you'll either have 0 or 1, but it can go higher. The bottom row on the tracker can be used to help keep track of this. (See "Turn Transition" for more information.)



In addition to being used to take damage, Resolve (or Temporary Resolve) **can be spent** for the following actions/effects:

- To use cards with a **Resolve cost**. Most defensive actions require Resolve, and most weapons have both normal & Resolve options.
- To **re-roll one die** or to re-roll **all** dice. (Any other combination, e.g. re-rolling 2 of 3 dice from an action, would require spending multiple times on the re-roll one die option.) Bonusses persist. Take the higher roll.
- To enable a single disabled card of yours.
- For an extra **Move or Fortify** action on a turn where you have not attacked. (Remember also that you can Move twice with your Innate).

You may spend **any amount** of your Resolve on a given turn.

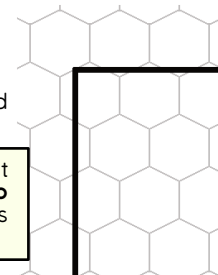
COMBAT

When the players enter (or create) an antagonistic situation, use these rules. They and their enemies take turns describing and resolving actions – not necessarily violent. The situation resolves when one side surrenders, is captured, escapes, or is defeated (or the GM declares it otherwise resolved).

Preparing for Combat

The GM should sketch the combat area on a hex grid and place figurines/tokens for the various combatants.

Note: Drawing straight lines on a **hex grid** isn't as hard as it might at first seem. The example on the right shows **how to draw** horizontal and vertical lines onto the grid such that it's clear which spaces belong on which side of the lines.



Next, determine "**initiative**", ie who can act first. Everybody hands the GM a distinctive card and the GM puts one in for the monsters. If a player or enemy declared an action that **caused the combat** to begin, that individual hands over 2 additional cards. **Shuffle** the cards, note the order (for those with more than one card in initiative, use the first), and return them to their owners. The first turn is for those players, if any, whose cards came before the enemies. After that, **alternate** between Enemy turn and Player turn.

If the players are **unnoticed** by their enemies when initiative is called, then each player may perform up to one covert action (such as moving a short distance, drawing a weapon, or casting a buff) before combat officially begins.

Non-Lethal Damage

Some RPGs have a concept of lethal vs non-lethal damage, and if attacks are not declared non-lethal, then the defender may die. In this setting, it is easy to revive someone who is unconscious and thus **all damage by default is non-lethal**. To kill someone, defeat them *and* state that you are killing them. While someone who has been defeated and left without receiving medical care might eventually die from their wounds, this is left as a story decision for the GM.

Fleeing / Chases

When a character decides to flee combat, the GM will declare a **location** or condition (e.g. the edge of the map, or climbing a ladder) at which a chase begins. Escapees who achieve this condition get away unless opponents also achieve it during their next turn and declare that they wish to chase (and which group or target). Combat may continue for those still fighting; those who aren't are taken off the map. Resolve chase actions during **turn transition**.

On each turn, each escaping group **declares a Task**: running, hiding, etc. Chasers declare a Task to keep up. *These are not opposed*. If both succeed or both fail, the chase continues. When a **chaser fails** but their target succeeds, they fall behind. They lose their quarry if they fall behind twice. If the **chaser succeeds** but their target fails, they get an attack or other action. The GM decides if that action can put them back into combat (or even end the scene).

We recommend abstracting even further by setting **all difficulties to 6** rather than deciding on a case-by-case basis – unless it's a story-important chase.

Player Turn

Players may act **in any order** during the Player turn. Only one action can happen at a time (as the GM needs to be aware of every action) but to move the game along quickly it is suggested that the players take one or both actions as they decide what they'd like to do. ie, don't wait on someone who is still deciding what to do, if somebody else (who hasn't acted yet) already has a plan. Unless you have special dispensation, **no player can take the same exact action twice** unless it's an Innate ability or unless they have it via two cards (e.g. dual-wielding or at multiple tiers via levelling).

Note: **Every card has a type** which determines when and how it can be played in combat. This is always the first tag and also is indicated by its front colour. The types are: Move, Attack, Fortify, Passive, Boost, Defend, and Free.

The players may each do all of the following during the player turn:

- Play any number of **Free** or **Boost** cards, but not more than once each. (Boost cards are used in combination with other cards.)
- **Disable** any number of your own cards, usually Passives. Flip or rotate the card to indicate its status as disabled: any advantages specifically listed upon disabling occur; **flaws remain** in effect; other advantages become unavailable until such time as the card is re-enabled. (This can actually happen at any time, not just on the player turn.)
- **Two other actions** (Move/Fortify/Attack cards, or Tasks).
- **Defense** cards are played on someone else's turn, when they attack you. You can play any number of Defense cards, but they often cost Resolve.

To play a card with a **Resolve** cost, remove that number of Resolve from your health track or temporary Resolve pool.

If you play a card with an associated **roll**, then you roll a **d12**, add and subtract any modifiers from passive cards in play, and succeed on the value on the card or higher. (Roll once for **area** attacks, but if your ability includes a secondary attack on success, roll again for that.) Your targets may each play defensive cards, but they must usually also succeed at a d12 roll. If you succeed, handle the effects. Note that the **damage listed on the card** happens to each target. **Bonus damage** happens only once, however you may choose how to spread out the extra damage between your possible targets. Actions count as a used action, and spent Resolve is still spent, whether or not the roll succeeds. (Recall that you can spend Resolve to re-roll.)

When all players and player Followers (see below) have performed all desired actions, move to the Turn Transition.

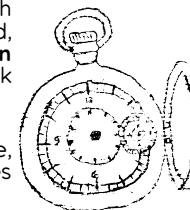
Followers

Friendly NPCs (or very weak enemies) are generally represented as a single **Follower** card. Follower **health** is calculated the same as enemies (see "Setting Difficulties") but they have **no resolve**: any of their allies may spend for them, and actions which would refresh Resolve on them heal instead - even if that action also heals, in which case heal twice. They also get two actions on the Player turn (Enemy turn if they are enemy Followers): **One innate** (from the player's Innate cards), and **one regular** (from their card or other source, e.g. magic gear). You may upgrade the innate action to another regular for 1 Resolve. Any player may direct the NPC. Use the Follower's token for movement, range, line of sight, etc.

Turn Transition

This occurs for the group (players or enemies) that just concluded their turn.

If you played **duration** cards this turn, note the amount. Each card has only one duration; if you use it again and succeed, the original effect is replaced. Cards which **started the turn with a duration** now apply their effect once and then tick down. If it hit 0 this turn, the duration now ends.



The **temporary Resolve** of each player **moves toward 1**. ie, if you have 0, gain 1. If you have 2 or more, lose 1. (**3** becomes 2, **2** becomes 1, **1** stays 1, **0** becomes 1.)

Enemy Turn

The GM controls all enemies and also decides **which cards** are available to each of them, thus determining their **health**. (See "Setting Difficulties" under "Planning Adventurers"). The GM has discretion to add or remove any ability or card, adjust health, designate enemies as followers or bosses, and make other changes. Maybe these are Zombie Kobolds. Or this dragon has half health and lacks "Flying" because the players used a trap to damage its wings. The GM has sole authority over these matters.

On the enemy turn, **every enemy performs their actions**, as per the Player turn. To simplify tracking for the GM, most enemies **do not have temporary Resolve**, although they do have regular Resolve unless otherwise noted. Boss enemies *do* earn temporary Resolve, and that makes them very powerful.

If there are cards in the combat that don't represent an actual enemy (usually **Hazard** cards), they may or may not act every turn - this is entirely up to the GM. These cards act whenever it makes the most sense. For example, a trap might "act" when someone steps onto its space.

Example Combat

Garn and Jai are negotiating with a minor noble in the Coastal Fiefdoms. It's going poorly. After a particularly egregious failed Bluff, the noble takes offense and orders his guards to drag our heroes to the dungeon. Paul says, "Screw that! **Garn pulls out her weapon!**"

The GM, Laura, declares a combat. For the map, she decides to just draw a simple room. She adds some doors and some furniture (which will act as obstacles). She then sets the noble's yellow marker near a table and puts a teal marker for guards near each of the 3 doors. Finally, she has the players arrange themselves by the noble.



Garn	♥♥♥♥♥	♥♥♥♥♥	Guard A	♥♥♥♥♥	♥♥♥♥♥
Jai	♥♥♥♥♥	♥♥♥♥♥	Guard B	♥♥♥♥♥	♥♥♥♥♥
Noble	♥♥♥♥♥	♥♥♥♥♥	Guard C	♥♥♥♥♥	♥♥♥♥♥

The enemies take their movement

Next, the **guards move**. None of them begins within 4 steps of the players, but “March” lets them move 3 steps *and* give 2 steps to their allies, so Laura moves two guards 5 steps each (every guard giving extra steps to the others), bringing them almost within range of their Natural Weapons. She then moves the last guard (C) 3 steps. That doesn’t get him near the combat, but it allows the other two guards to move into position.

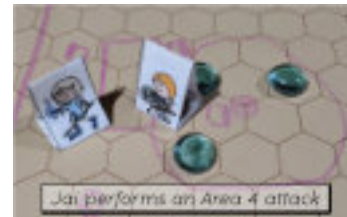


Garn							Guard A					
Jai							Guard B					
Noble							Guard C					

- 19 -



Jo decides to go with **option 4**. She spends 2 Resolve (1 temporary) for Sky Shaper and her attack. She then moves the far guard (C) just within the area of her spell, and rolls her d12. A 6 – it hits, and doesn't trigger Armoured. Laura decides against spending actions for Phalanx, and takes 1 Resolve and 2 Damage from Guard A, and 2 Resolve and 1 Damage from both of the others.

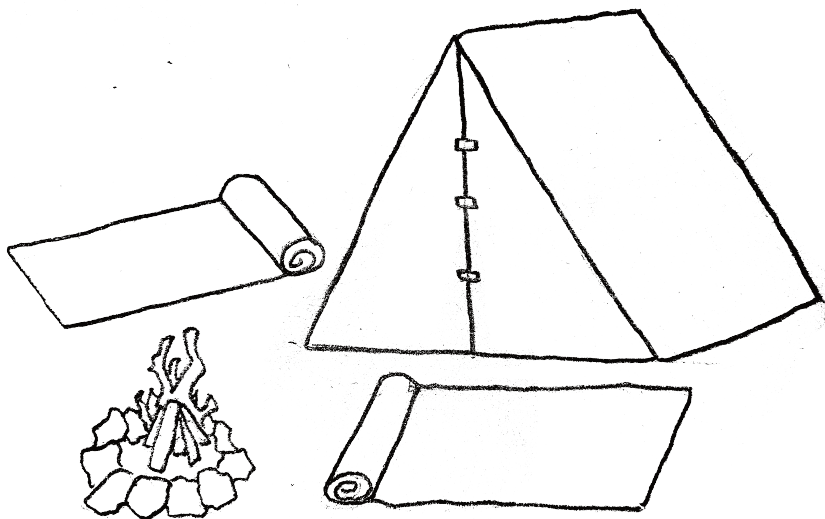


Paul chooses option 2, but he'll spend for Heavy Blow to boost the Axe attack. (Note that he cannot spend twice and boost both, because that would be using a non-Innate ability twice.) Paul rolls a 3 for his Axe. This would waste Heavy Blow and lose his cleave, so he spends a Resolve and rolls again. He misses again! Fully committed, he spends *again* and this time rolls 6. This will hit, but Armoured kicks in and reduces the damage by 1. Guard A will take 3 damage and miss an action. Laura takes it all from Resolve. Rolling 7 to cleave, Garn also deals 2 damage to Guard B, which Laura splits between Health and Resolve. Seeing that he can't take down Guard A with Punch, and knowing that Jai has area attacks, Paul targets Guard B but he rolls a 6 and misses. He ends his turn.

Garn								Guard A					
Jai								Guard B					
Noble								Guard C					

MOMENTS OF CALM

Resting or Recovering



Cards **disabled out of combat** cannot be freely regenerated. You can enable them with Resolve, but your Resolve does not come back automatically even if you have allies with healing or “enable cards” abilities. Instead, the GM declares “**scene**” transitions when the situation significantly changes. One way to think of this is: if this were a TV show, would this be a good time for a commercial break, or a cut-away to the villain? At minimum, a scene changes: when combat ends; when the players successfully complete a negotiation; when a tense situation eases; when the party travels; or when they decide to rest for any amount of time.

- At a **Scene Transition** or brief break, negative effects (e.g. poison) end immediately; positive effects (e.g. healing) play out; and the players can use Fortify cards *once each* in any order. You cannot declare more than one rest per scene except via an extended break.
- An **Extended Break** generally takes 6-8 hours. It happens when the party declares that they stop to sleep or rest for a long period of time. Players can perform one or two idle activities during the rest, such as reading or keeping watch, but the break is not narrated in detail – players should say what they’re doing, then the GM should skip ahead. After the break, **everything is reset** completely. All allied characters are revived and all Health and Resolve is completely reset, even if there are no healers in the party.
- Generally, you should also do a complete reset **between sessions**, even if the group isn’t actually taking a break. This is because it’s easier to track, and also because frequent “resets” improve pacing. The GM is, however, encouraged to forgo the session reset if the game ends on a **cliff-hanger** e.g. in the middle of a tense scene or just before a fight.

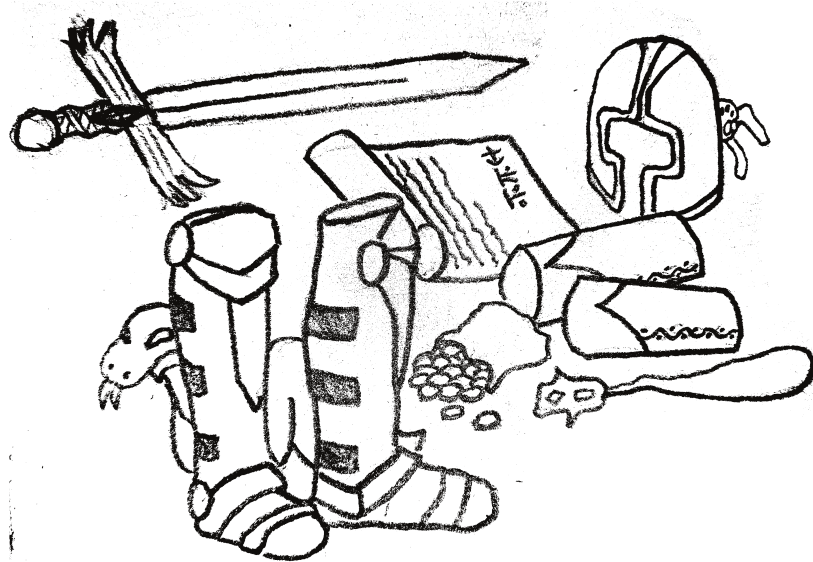
Managing Equipment

You can own multiple pieces of gear, and freely exchange with party members outside of combat. However, **when combat starts** you can only be wearing one set of armour, one pair of boots, and holding one set of weapons. Switching this gear in combat takes an action.

Your equipment does not automatically level up when you do. Instead, you must **find or purchase** new gear as you adventure.

Mundane equipment can be purchased between Adventures, for a cost of **100g per Tier of the item**. You can also sell used equipment at a default (but occasionally negotiable, if the GM decides that the seller is amenable) rate of half the purchase value. Equipment can also be **enchanted**. Every piece of gear has exactly **one enchantment slot**. You do not begin play with any enchanted gear, and it shouldn’t often be available for purchase, but you can find it during adventures. You might, for example, encounter a Tier 1 Buckler with a Tier 3 enchantment - or vice versa.

You might also find a variety of **books, amulets, familiars**, and so forth. These “floating” enchantments are unattached to any equipment. You can equip **up to 3** of these, which means that you can never have more than 7 enchantment cards in your deck (or fewer, if you have less gear). Enchantments sell at a 50g/Tier.



PLANNING ADVENTURES

Designing Encounters

There are 3 types of Enemy card. You can create encounters using these in any way you wish (or even give player Talent cards to enemies) but in general, **Hazards** are intended to represent non-sentient, non-acting forces such as traps or extreme cold; **Monsters** are enemy creatures; and **Modifiers** are “extras” that work well added onto any monster.

If you don't have an idea for the encounter yet, look at “Generating Adventures”. Once you do have a general plan, choose the cards you want to represent your idea. No enemy should have more than **5 cards** (plus the Innate card). Begin with the cards for the **enemy type** (e.g. Kobold) and **category** (e.g. Goblinoid) - there should only be a few. If none match, find the closest thing you can. Finally, add Modifiers that you feel fit. Most enemy cards will have suggested **Modifier** cards listed along the bottom.

Setting Difficulties

You can determine an Enemy's “**Tier Total**” by adding up the Tier number of all their non-innate abilities (all enemies have access to the enemy Innates). A single card with multiple abilities does count for *each ability*. They are then considered **equal in power to a player** with the same Tier Total - which for players only considers *Talent* cards and will be their level + 4. This works because player gear and temporary resolve (which most enemies don't have) balance out versus stronger enemy abilities and passives. **Enemy health** mirrors players too, with health (and therefore also Resolve) **equal to their TT**.

For combats that are **somewhat challenging but unlikely to be lost**, make the enemy party's TT equal to the player party's TT. Adding (or subtracting) an entire enemy of comparable TT will make the fight notably harder or easier, but not unreasonably so - although of course it will affect it more if your player count is small. You can affect the difficulty more minutely by adding an ability to an enemy or increasing an ability's tier. Also, turning an enemy into a **Follower** (no Resolve and restricted actions; see “Followers” under “Combat” for more detail) or a **Boss** (who earns temporary Resolve, see “Enemy Turn”) approximately **halves or doubles** the effect of that enemy on the combat.

Campaigns

Like other role-playing games, DoMD is designed to work particularly well when played **multiple sessions** over weeks, months, or years. The players don't have to remain the same for the whole campaign, but it does help to have a **defined group**, where players might miss occasional sessions (or people might join up or leave from time to time) but the group has a relatively consistent core. Over multiple games the players can acquire enchanted items, become stronger, and embark on **interweaving adventures** where they meet recurring villains and gain helpful allies.

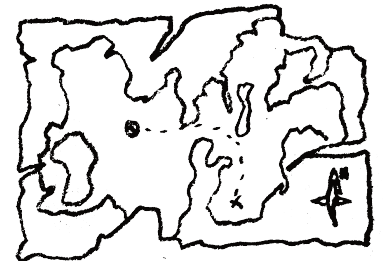
To manage a consistent story, it helps to have a consistent GM. This person can plan narrative twists in advance and just generally have a cohesive story in mind. However, it's not necessary. DoMD can just as easily be played with **multiple GMs** taking turns at the helm. Maybe a regular player has a short story arc in mind and wants to take over for 3-5 sessions, or maybe the regular GM is sick. DoMD excels at this, because 1) generating a random session or encounter is built right into the system, and 2) session planning requires very little writing and math, so it's fast compared to other tabletop RPGs.

Generating Adventures

For a single **random encounter**, just draw some Enemy cards (any type) from an appropriate Tier, and make up a creature that could have all of those abilities. If you really can't make it work, replace cards until you can.

To **generate an entire session**, begin adding random elements in the order listed here. Plan for one, maybe two combats, depending how many other scenes & decisions the session contains. Generate everything in advance - but if inspiration hits *at any point*, let that take over. You may leave ignore cards or results that don't fit well together - but remember that sometimes it's the strangest combinations that make for the most memorable games.

1. Draw a random **Quest Giver** card and then roll as instructed via the card to determine the final result.
2. Combine the **Faction** cards with one of each **enemy type**. Draw one.
3. Draw a random **Location** and again, roll for the specific result. You can download & print matching maps from our website, or sketch one.
4. Draw and roll for a **Goal**.
5. Draw and roll for a **Twist**.
6. If you need some ideas or the session seems short, combine **everything** and pick another card.



Try to find a story in the elements as presented. If you can't make sense of it, you could just do two separate random encounters... but if you can change aspects to make a cohesive episode, always do that instead.

After you have a cohesive story, whenever possible, create a **Player Hook**: something to draw the group into the story or connect them to it. Use a person, item, or faction that one or more of them has a stake in. Occasionally, when one player is more invested than the others, consider centering the story around that player. Try to give similar opportunities for your other players later. A few ideas:

- An old friend of a PC (player character)
- An object a PC would recognize
- Someone or something from a previous session
- A friend/relative/lover/enemy of a well-known non-player character
- A step toward a PC's goals

AFTER THE GAME

Gaining XP

The entire party is always at the **same level of XP**. If somebody has missed a lot of games, then you may wish to use an *optional* rule wherein players who have missed sessions stay at the previous level for one battle per missed session - but never more than one level behind.

Experience is rewarded based on “**Scenes**”. Consider the important moments in the session that just occurred. Group these moments together as one scene if they occur in the **same place** and the group is working toward the **same goal**. Don't worry too much about doing this perfectly, just **trust your gut**.

Reward XP **for combat and for role-play**. These are granted to all players, not divided between them. Each scene grants 0-3 XP. 0 is for the “nothing” scenes that just aren't important or memorable in any way. If the scene would be **worth mentioning** in a session summary or recap, then it's worth at least **1**.

Longer, challenging, or more in-depth scenes would be worth **2**. This could mean an on-level combat encounter, or a series of tasks to achieve a specific goal.

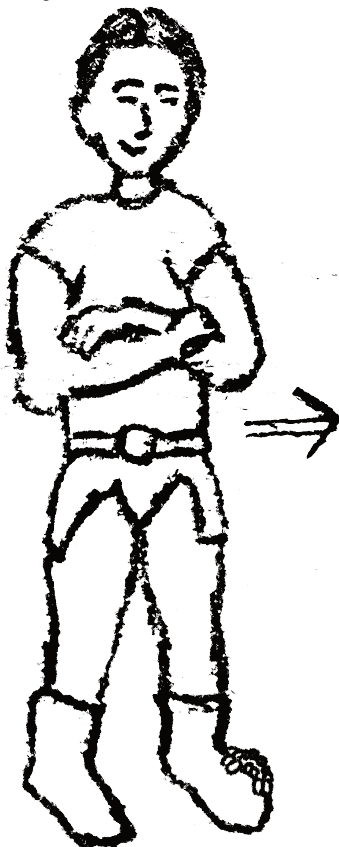
3 should be rarer, but you shouldn't give less than **3** if the players completed a major arc or succeeded at a nail-biting fight/challenge.

A few reasons to award the higher XP values:

- Recruiting a useful ally.
- Making a significant discovery.
- A step on a story or character arc.
- Choosing the harder path because it's more in-character or more fun.
- Taking opportunities to engage seriously with the story and each other characters.
- Players creating opportunities for each other rather than taking all the glory.
- Clever plans falling perfectly into place.
- Truly memorable moments.

The amount of additional XP required to gain the next level is equal to the **party's next level squared**. So a level 3 party needs 16 XP in total to level up (you'll already have 9 or so from hitting level 3).

Calculating XP and granting a level-up is generally done at the end of each session so as not to interrupt the flow of play.



Levelling Up

When you level up, you get to make **one improvement** to your deck. This can be a brand new card at Tier 1, or upgrade one card to the next Tier. However, you **cannot create a gap** by upgrading a card. If all of your cards are Tier 1 except for one at Tier 2, you cannot upgrade that card to Tier 3 because then you would have no cards at Tier 2. Note that you can **raise the minimum Tier** by getting all of your cards to higher Tiers. It then becomes possible to *temporarily* introduce gaps by adding a card - if all cards are Tier 4, a new card at Tier 1 will create a gap. In this case, you cannot upgrade any of the Tier 4 or higher cards until the gap is corrected, although you *can* add more new cards.

You should still keep within 1-2 races and 1-2 classes, with the same reasons and caveat given under “Creating Your Own Character”. Also note that it is valid to have **two versions of a card** in your deck. You gain the benefits of both. (Enemies can do this too, but usually don't)

Making Changes

To encourage quick decision making when first creating characters, it's very easy to **make changes to your character** early on. No good can come of forcing players to make permanent decisions before they've seen how the game works. However, as you level up it becomes harder:

- At or before level 3, you may freely change around anything. Basically, start from scratch and re-make all choices. (This is even allowed to some extent during combat, but only if nobody minds.)
- After hitting level 4, you can no longer make changes between level-ups, and you may only swap out one card at each new level. New cards are brought in at Tier 1; if you drop a higher Tier card, upgrade other cards instead (once per card). Do not break any of the rules in “Creating a Character”. Additionally, at this point you can no longer change your race (at least, not without a good story excuse and the blessing of your GM).

