

ShadowDark

THE ROLE-PLAYING GAME



PLAYER QUICKSTART GUIDE

ShadowDark

Player Quickstart Guide for Shadowdark RPG

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ShadowDark



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WHAT IS SHADOWDARK?

Shadowdark RPG is a fantasy adventure game where you and your companions delve into buried ruins, lost cities, spider-infested forests, and even fearsome dragon lairs in search of gold and glory.

The Shadowdark is any place where danger and darkness hold sway. It clutches ancient secrets and dusty treasures in its rotting claws, daring fortune seekers to tempt their fates.

With your adventuring companions at your side, you confront the Shadowdark's sinister traps, formidable magics, and ruthless monsters.

If you survive, you'll bring back untold riches plucked from the jaws of death itself. And before long, you'll hear the Shadowdark's call once again!

WHAT DEFINES THIS GAME?

Speed, danger, and simplicity. Magic is perilous, and battles are fast and deadly. Being clever is crucial for survival.

Shadowdark RPG is rules-light and intuitive. It encourages quick decisions rather than hunting through the rulebook for answers.

In this game, a torch only holds back the pressing darkness for one hour of real-world time. There isn't a moment to waste when the flames are burning low...

HOW DO I PLAY?

Everything you need to get started playing is in this tome. Turn to the next section to get familiar with the basics!

The Basics

If this is your first time playing *Shadowdark RPG*, it's helpful to start with a premade character. Several adventurers are included with this book.

These **quickstart rules** cover beginner characters for their first few adventures. The full rules go much further; check them out at thearcanelibrary.com/pages/shadowdark.

CHARACTERS

You decide your character's actions and tell them to the referee, or Game Master (**GM**).

The GM determines if your actions are successful and describes the results.

This back-and-forth between you, the GM, and your adventuring companions grows and shapes the game world.

Always ask yourself: If you were really your character, what would you do right now?

DESCRIBE AN ACTION

On your **turn**, describe an **action** you want to do. For example, you could say you're going to shoot your bow at a troll.

The GM might ask you to make a **check** (see Checks) to determine whether your action succeeds.

MOVEMENT

During your turn, you can **move** up to **near** (roughly 30 feet). You can break this movement up in any way. If you don't take an action, you can move near again.

ROUNDS

Each person takes a turn, starting with the GM and going clockwise. The GM controls the monsters and environment and narrates how everyone's actions change the game world.

Once everyone has taken a turn, that completes one **round**. Then, a new round begins.

THE DICE

You'll need a four-sided (**d4**), six-sided (**d6**), eight-sided (**d8**), ten-sided (**d10**), twelve-sided (**d12**) and twenty-sided (**d20**) die.

Multiples. 3d6 = three six-sided dice. Roll them together and add them.

Advantage. Roll two times and use the higher result.

Disadvantage. Roll two times and use the lower result.

STATS

Stats are your characteristics. Each stat goes from 3-18 and has a bonus or penalty (called a **modifier**, or MOD) from -4 to +4.

Strength. Physical power.

Dexterity. Agility, reflexes.

Constitution. Endurance, resistance to injury.

Intelligence. Logical ability.

Wisdom. Instinct, willpower.

Charisma. Appeal, presence.

CHECKS

When attempting a risky action, roll a d20 and add a modifier. That's called making a **check**.

The GM chooses the check's linked stat and a number called a difficulty class (**DC**). If the total of your d20 roll + stat modifier equals or beats the DC, your action succeeds.

For example, the GM might say leaping over a narrow chasm requires a DC 9 Strength check.

HIT POINTS

Injuries cause you to take **damage** and lose hit points (**HP**). Typical weapons deal 1d6 damage to your HP. You regain lost HP after a night of rest.

Characters at zero HP **die** in 1d4 + Constitution modifier (minimum 1) rounds. Dead characters are retired from play!

WHAT'S NEXT?

You could play a whole game with just the basics. But once you're ready for more, the next chapters expand upon them.



Characters



Both the wise and foolish risk their fortunes in the Shadowdark. The darkness decides who is who.

Overview

To make a *Shadowdark RPG* character (also called a player character, or **PC**), grab your dice, a blank character sheet, and go through the next few pages. You can also view a walkthrough at youtube.com/thearcanelibrary.

NAME

Choose a worthy name for your adventurer.

ANCESTRY

Your character's cultural and ancestral heritage.

CLASS

Your character's job.

LEVEL

You start at 1st level, and you gain levels by earning XP.

XP

You start with 0 experience points (**XP**). You gain XP based on the treasure and boons you earn from adventuring.

ALIGNMENT & DEITY

Your character's cosmic link to the opposing forces of Law and Chaos, or balanced Neutrality.

TITLE

As you gain levels, your prestige grows. Your title is based on your level, class, and alignment.

BACKGROUND

Your history and past experience. You are adept at tasks related to your background.

STATS

The six scores that determine your physical and mental characteristics.

HP

Hit points (**HP**) represent the amount of injury you can sustain before you die. Taking damage from weapons, traps, spells, or other sources temporarily reduces your HP. You can regain HP by resting.

AC

Armor class (**AC**) is a type of difficulty class that shows how tough it is to injure you, whether because you're agile or you wear armor. Your class determines the type of armor you can wear.

Your AC starts at 10 + your Dexterity modifier. Wearing armor changes your AC (see Armor, pg. 34).

ATTACKS

The weapons you wield and how you use them to fight an enemy (see Combat on pg. 50 for details). You can wield the weapons listed for your class.

TALENTS

Your special abilities. Your class, ancestry, and talent rolls grant you these. The benefits of talents combine (even the same talent rolled multiple times).

SPELLS

Some classes can learn and cast magic spells (see Casting Spells on pg. 52 for more details).

GEAR

Your equipment. You can carry a number of items equal to 10 or your Strength stat, whichever is higher.

1ST-LEVEL CHARACTERS

Most games begin with 1st-level characters — fledgling heroes who are ready to go on dangerous adventures.

1st-level characters start with:

- Background, pg. 14
- Stats, pg. 15
- Choice of ancestry, pg. 16
- Choice of class, pg. 18-24
- One class talent roll
- Hit points equal to one roll of their class's hit points die + their Constitution modifier (minimum 1)
- Title, pg. 26
- Choice of alignment, pg. 28
- 2d6 x 5 gold pieces to buy gear (see Gear, pg. 32).

Background

Your background knowledge and skills might prove useful during your adventures.

Work with the GM to determine if your background provides you advantages in a given situation.



BACKGROUND



d20 Details

- | | |
|----|--|
| 1 | Urchin. You grew up in the merciless streets of a large city |
| 2 | Wanted. There's a price on your head, but you have allies |
| 3 | Cult Initiate. You know blasphemous secrets and rituals |
| 4 | Thieves' Guild. You have connections, contacts, and debts |
| 5 | Banished. Your people cast you out for supposed crimes |
| 6 | Orphaned. An unusual guardian rescued and raised you |
| 7 | Wizard's Apprentice. You have a knack and eye for magic |
| 8 | Jeweler. You can easily appraise value and authenticity |
| 9 | Herbalist. You know plants, medicines, and poisons |
| 10 | Barbarian. You left the horde, but it never quite left you |
| 11 | Mercenary. You fought friend and foe alike for your coin |
| 12 | Sailor. Pirate, privateer, or merchant — the seas are yours |
| 13 | Acolyte. You're well trained in religious rites and doctrines |
| 14 | Soldier. You served as a fighter in an organized army |
| 15 | Ranger. The woods and wilds are your true home |
| 16 | Scout. You survived on stealth, observation, and speed |
| 17 | Minstrel. You've traveled far with your charm and talent |
| 18 | Scholar. You know much about ancient history and lore |
| 19 | Noble. A famous name has opened many doors for you |
| 20 | Chirurgeon. You know anatomy, surgery, and first aid |

Stats

To determine your character's stats, roll 3d6 in order for each one. Note each total and modifier on your character sheet.

Optionally, if none of your stats are 14 or higher, you may roll a new set of six numbers.

Strength. Fight with a sword, bash open doors, swim. Important for fighters.

Dexterity. Shoot a bow, balance on a ledge, sneak silently, hide. Important for thieves.

Constitution. Hold your breath, resist poison, endure injury.

Intelligence. Cast wizard spells, decipher runes, learn new skills. Important for wizards.

Wisdom. Cast priest spells, detect the hidden, recognize omens. Important for priests.

Charisma. Convince creatures to be friendly, resist mental control.

STATS	
Stat	Modifier
1-3	-4
4-5	-3
6-7	-2
8-9	-1
10-11	0
12-13	+1
14-15	+2
16-17	+3
18+	+4



Ancestry

DWARF

Brave, stalwart folk as sturdy as the stone kingdoms they carve inside mountains.

You know the Common and Dwarvish languages.

Stout. Start with +2 HP. Roll hit points per level with advantage.

ELF

Ethereal, graceful people who revere knowledge and beauty. Elves see far and live long.

You know the Common, Elvish, and Sylvan languages.

Farsight. You get a +1 bonus to attack rolls with ranged weapons or a +1 bonus to spellcasting checks.

GOBLIN

Green, clever beings who thrive in dark, cramped places. As fierce as they are tiny.

You know the Common and Goblin languages.

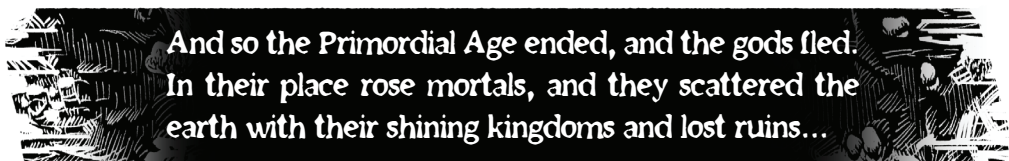
Keen Senses. You can't be surprised.

HALFLING

Small, cheerful country folk with mischievous streaks. They enjoy life's simple pleasures.

You know the Common language.

Stealthy. Once per day, you can become invisible for 3 rounds.



HALF-ORC

Towering, tusked warriors who are as daring as humans and as relentless as orcs.

You know the Common and Orcish languages.

Mighty. You have a +1 bonus to attack and damage rolls with melee weapons.

HUMAN

Bold, adaptable, and diverse people who learn quickly and accomplish mighty deeds.

You know the Common language and one additional common language (pg. 29).

Ambitious. You gain one additional talent roll at 1st level.



Fighter Class

Blood-soaked gladiators in dented armor, acrobatic duelists with darting swords, or far-eyed elven archers who carve their legends with steel and grit.

Weapons: All weapons

Armor: All armor and shields

Hit Points: 1d8 per level

Hauler. Add your Constitution modifier, if positive, to your gear slots.

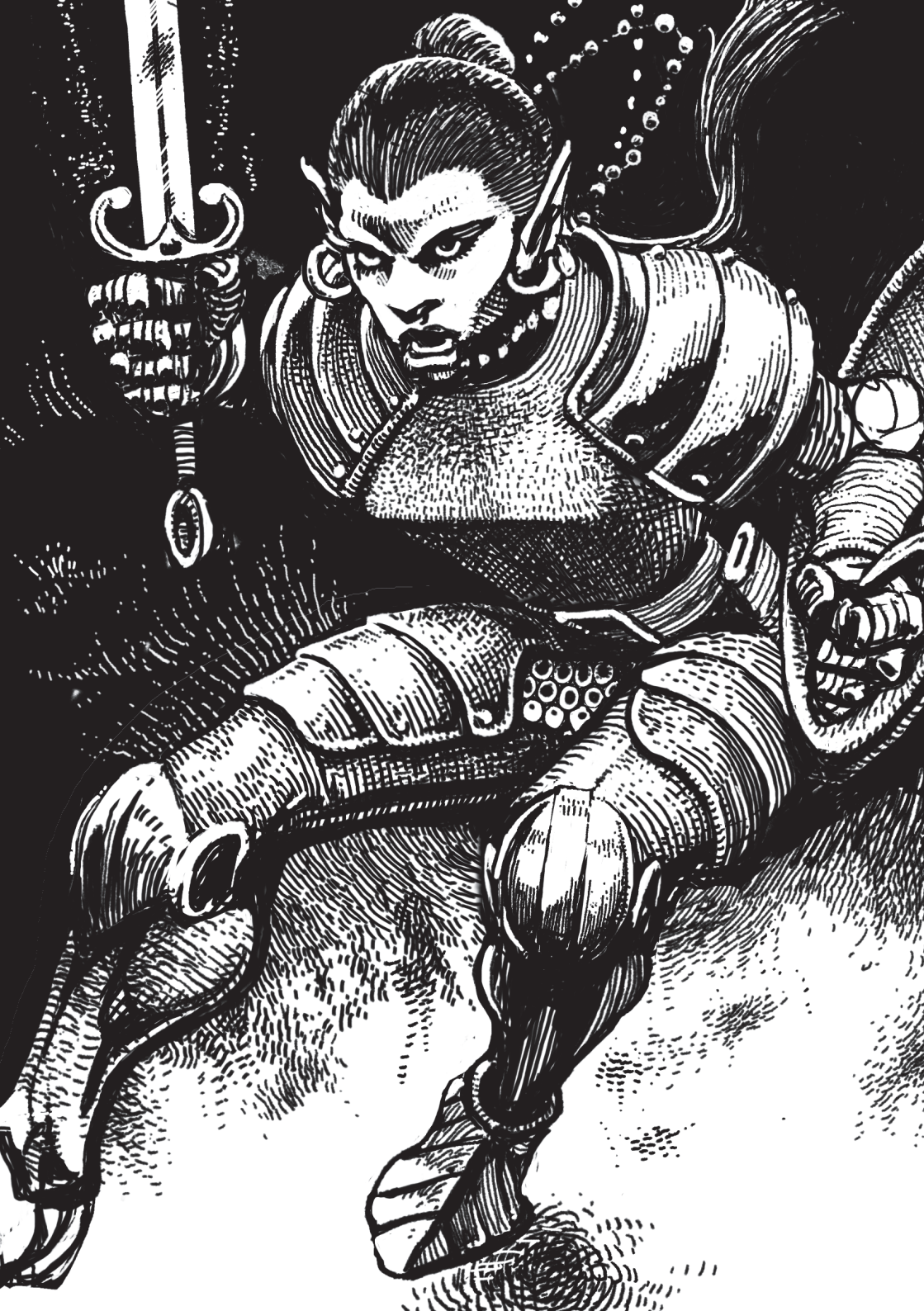
Weapon Mastery. Choose one type of weapon, such as longswords. You gain +1 to attack and damage with that weapon type. In addition, add half your level to these rolls (round down).

Grit. Choose Strength or Dexterity. You have advantage on checks of that type to overcome an opposing force, such as kicking open a stuck door (Strength) or slipping free of rusty chains (Dexterity).

FIGHTER TALENTS

2d6	Effect
2	Gain Weapon Mastery with one additional weapon type
3-6	+1 to melee and ranged attacks
7-9	+2 to Strength, Dexterity, or Constitution stat
10-11	Choose one kind of armor. You get +1 AC from that armor
12	Choose a talent or +2 points to distribute to stats

“Nothing sings sweeter than a whistling axe!”
-Jorbin, dwarf fighter



Priest Class

Crusading templars, prophetic shamans, or mad-eyed zealots who wield the power of their gods to cleanse the unholy.

Weapons: Club, crossbow, dagger, mace, longsword, staff, warhammer

Armor: All armor and shields

Hit Points: 1d6 per level

Languages. You know either Celestial, Diabolic, or Primordial.

Turn Undead. You know the *turn undead* spell. It doesn't count toward your number of known spells.

Deity. Choose a god to serve who matches your alignment (see Deities, pg. 30). You have a holy symbol for your god (it takes up no gear slots).

Spellcasting. You can cast priest spells you know.

You know two tier 1 spells of your choice from the priest spell list on pg. 57.

Each time you gain a level, you choose new priest spells to learn according to the Priest Spells Known table.

For casting priest spells, see Spellcasting on pg. 52.

PRIEST TALENTS

2d6	Effect
2	Gain advantage on casting one spell you know
3-6	+1 to melee or ranged attacks
7-9	+1 to priest spellcasting checks
10-11	+2 to Strength or Wisdom stat
12	Choose a talent or +2 points to distribute to stats

PRIEST SPELLS KNOWN

Spells Known By Spell Tier

Level	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	-	-	-	-
2	3	-	-	-	-
3	3	1	-	-	-
4	3	2	-	-	-
5	3	2	1	-	-
6	3	2	2	-	-
7	3	3	2	1	-
8	3	3	2	2	-
9	3	3	2	2	1
10	3	3	3	2	2



Thief Class

Rooftop assassins, grinning con artists, or cloaked cat burglars who can pluck a gem from the claws of a sleeping demon and sell it for twice its worth.

Weapons: Club, crossbow, dagger, shortbow, shortsword

Armor: Leather armor, mithral chainmail

Hit Points: 1d4 per level

Backstab. If you hit a creature who is unaware of your attack, you deal an extra weapon die of damage. Add additional weapon dice of damage equal to half your level (round down).

Thievery. You are adept at thieving skills and have the necessary tools of the trade secreted on your person (they take up no gear slots).

You are trained in the following tasks and have advantage on any associated checks:

- Climbing
- Sneaking and hiding
- Applying disguises
- Finding and disabling traps
- Delicate tasks such as picking pockets and opening locks

THIEF TALENTS

2d6	Effect
2	Gain advantage on initiative rolls (reroll if duplicate)
3-5	Your Backstab deals +1 dice of damage
6-9	+2 to Strength, Dexterity, or Charisma stat
10-11	+1 to melee and ranged attacks
12	Choose a talent or +2 points to distribute to stats



Wizard Class

Rune-tattooed adepts, bespectacled magi, and flame-conjuring witches who dare to manipulate the fell forces of magic.

Weapons: Dagger, staff

Armor: None

Hit Points: 1d4 per level

Languages. You know two additional common languages and two rare languages (see pg. 29).

Learning Spells. You can permanently learn a wizard spell from a spell scroll by studying it for a day and succeeding on a DC 15 Intelligence check.

Whether you succeed or fail, you expend the spell scroll.

Spells you learn in this way don't count toward your known spells.

Spellcasting. You can cast wizard spells you know.

You know three tier 1 spells of your choice from the wizard spell list (see pg. 57).

Each time you gain a level, you choose new wizard spells to learn according to the Wizard Spells Known table.

For casting wizard spells, see Spellcasting on pg. 52.



WIZARD SPELLS KNOWN

Spells Known By Spell Tier

Level	1	2	3	4	5
1	3	-	-	-	-
2	4	-	-	-	-
3	4	1	-	-	-
4	4	2	-	-	-
5	4	2	1	-	-
6	4	3	2	-	-
7	4	3	2	1	-
8	4	4	2	2	-
9	4	4	3	2	1
10	4	4	4	2	2

WIZARD TALENTS

2d6 Effect

- | | |
|-------|--|
| 2 | Make one random magic item (see <i>GM Quickstart Guide</i>) |
| 3-7 | +2 to Intelligence stat or +1 to wizard spellcasting checks |
| 8-9 | Gain advantage on casting one spell you know |
| 10-11 | Learn one additional wizard spell of any tier you know |
| 12 | Choose a talent or +2 points to distribute to stats |

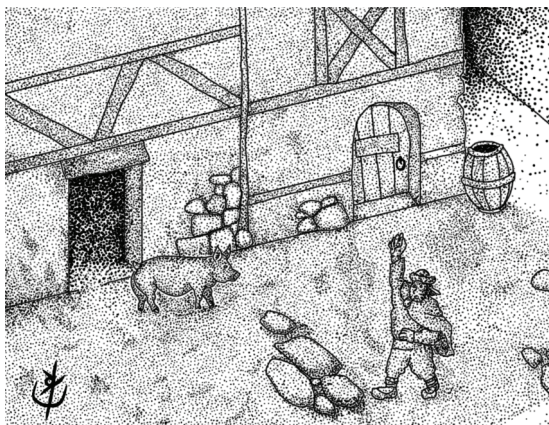


Titles

As you gain levels, your title changes to reflect an increase in your fame (or infamy).

Your legend begins to precede you as your renown grows, for good or for ill.

An improved title could present opportunities that were previously out of your reach.

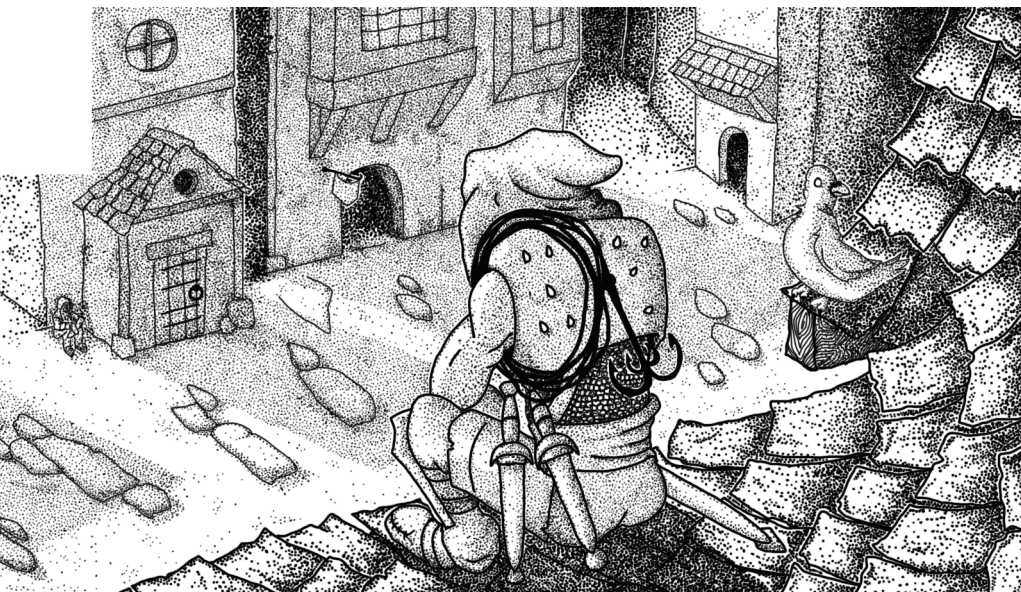


FIGHTER TITLES

Level	Lawful	Chaotic	Neutral
1-2	Squire	Knave	Warrior
3-4	Cavalier	Bandit	Barbarian
5-6	Knight	Slayer	Battlerager
7-8	Thane	Reaver	Warchief
9-10	Lord/Lady	Warlord	Chieftain

PRIEST TITLES

Level	Lawful	Chaotic	Neutral
1-2	Acolyte	Initiate	Seeker
3-4	Crusader	Zealot	Invoker
5-6	Templar	Cultist	Haruspex
7-8	Champion	Scourge	Mystic
9-10	Paladin	Chaos Knight	Oracle



THIEF TITLES

Level	Lawful	Chaotic	Neutral
1-2	Footpad	Thug	Robber
3-4	Burglar	Cutthroat	Outlaw
5-6	Rook	Shadow	Rogue
7-8	Underboss	Assassin	Renegade
9-10	Boss	Wraith	Bandit King/Queen

WIZARD TITLES

Level	Lawful	Chaotic	Neutral
1-2	Apprentice	Adept	Shaman
3-4	Conjurer	Channeler	Seer
5-6	Arcanist	Witch/Warlock	Warden
7-8	Mage	Diabolist	Sage
9-10	Archmage	Sorcerer	Druid



Witch Class

Cackling crones stooped over cauldrons, chanting shamans smeared in blood and clay, and outcast maidens with milky eyes that see portents and secrets.

Weapons: Dagger, staff

Armor: Leather armor

Hit Points: 1d4 per level

Languages. You know Diabolic, Primordial, and Sylvan.

Familiar. You have a small animal such as a raven, rat, or frog who serves you loyally. It can speak Common.

Your familiar can be the source of spells you cast. Treat it as though it were you for determining spell ranges.

If your familiar dies, you can restore it to life by permanently sacrificing 1d4 hit points.

Spellcasting. You can cast witch spells you know.

You know three tier 1 spells of your choice from the witch spell list (see pg. 24).

Each time you gain a level, you choose new witch spells to learn according to the Witch Spells Known table.

You use your Charisma stat to cast witch spells. The DC is 10 + the spell's tier.

If you fail a spellcasting check, you can't cast that spell again until you complete a rest.

If you roll a natural 1 on a spellcasting check, you must also roll on the corresponding Diabolical Mishap table for the spell's tier (see pg. 22).

WITCH SPELLS KNOWN

Spells Known By Spell Tier

Level	1	2	3	4	5
1	3	-	-	-	-
2	4	-	-	-	-
3	4	1	-	-	-
4	4	2	-	-	-
5	4	2	1	-	-
6	4	3	2	-	-
7	4	3	2	1	-
8	4	4	2	2	-
9	4	4	3	2	1
10	4	4	4	2	2

WITCH TALENTS

2d6 Effect (2 duplicate = +1 use per day)

- 2 1/day, teleport to your familiar's location as a move
- 3-7 +2 to Charisma stat or +1 to witch spellcasting checks
- 8-9 Gain advantage on casting one spell you know
- 10-11 Learn an additional witch spell of any tier you can cast
- 12 Choose a talent or +2 points to distribute to stats



Titles

KNIGHT OF ST. YDRIS TITLES

Level	Lawful	Chaotic	Neutral
1-2	Arbiter	Traitor	Brother/Sister
3-4	Enforcer	Fallen	Exorcist
5-6	Knight Marshal	Oathbreaker	Reverend Knight
7-8	Judge	Blackguard	Inquisitor
9-10	Justiciar	Demonlord	Grand Inquisitor

WARLOCK TITLES

Level	Lawful	Chaotic	Neutral
1-2	Favored	Marked	Chosen
3-4	Herald	Zealot	Channeler
5-6	Eminent	Occultist	Prophesied
7-8	Exalted	Champion	Transcendent
9-10	Incarnation	Harbinger	Avatar

WITCH TITLES

Level	Lawful	Chaotic	Neutral
1-2	Fortune Teller	Whisperer	Shaman
3-4	Far Seer	Hexer	Conjurer
5-6	Prophet	Hag/Elder	Soothsayer
7-8	Wise One	Crone/Uncle	Conduit
9-10	Baba	Baba	Baba



Pit Fighter Class

Blood-soaked warriors circling each other in a roaring arena, scarred desert bandits dueling for the right to lead their gang, or brash tavern brawlers who never turn down a challenge.

Weapons: All weapons

Armor: Leather armor, shields

Hit Points: 1d8 per level

Flourish. 3/day, regain 1d6 hit points when you hit an enemy with a melee attack.

Implacable. You have advantage on Constitution checks to resist injury, poison, or endure extreme environments.

Last Stand. You get up from dying with 1 hit point on a natural d20 roll of 18-20.

Relentless. 3/day, when you are reduced to 0 HP, make a DC 18 Constitution check (the Implacable talent applies to this roll). On a success, you instead go to 1 HP.

PIT FIGHTER TALENTS

2d6	Effect (2 duplicate = additional use per day)
2	1/day, ignore all damage and effects from one attack
3-6	You gain +1 to melee weapon damage
7-9	+2 to Strength or Constitution stat, or +1 to melee attacks
10-11	Increase the HP you gain from Flourish by 1d6
12	Choose a talent or +2 points to distribute to stats

"It's over when I SAY it's over!"
-Markesh, human pit fighter

Titles

DESERT RIDER TITLES

Level	Lawful	Chaotic	Neutral
1-2	Outrider	Bandit	Rat
3-4	Sandrunner	Robber	Fox
5-6	Trailblazer	Raider	Wolf
7-8	Swift Wind	Scourge	Tiger
9-10	Stormrunner	Bandit King/Queen	Dragon

PIT FIGHTER TITLES

Level	Lawful	Chaotic	Neutral
1-2	Rookie	Ruffian	Underdog
3-4	Gladiator	Brawler	Dark Horse
5-6	Hero	Heel	Wild Card
7-8	Champion	Villain	Victor
9-10	Legend	Legend	Legend

RAS-GODAI TITLES

Level	Lawful	Chaotic	Neutral
1-2	Acolyte	Acolyte	Acolyte
3-4	Mirror Path	Shadow Path	Fire Path
5-6	Monk	Monk	Monk
7-8	Master	Assassin	Demon Blade
9-10	White Lotus	Black Lotus	Red Lotus

Alignment

Alignment defines your role in the clash between good and evil. All creatures are connected to the eternal conflict waged by Law, Chaos, and Neutrality, whether they know it or not.

Law is benevolence, Chaos is malevolence, and Neutrality is impartial, favoring neither.

Choose one of the following three alignments.



CHAOTIC

Chaotic characters align themselves with destruction, ambition, and wickedness. Chaotic characters adopt a “survival of the fittest” mentality.

LAWFUL

Lawful characters align themselves with fairness, order, and virtue. Lawful characters operate from a “good of the whole” mentality.

NEUTRAL

Neutral characters find balance between Law and Chaos. They align with the cycle of growth and decline, adopting a “nature must take its course” mentality.

Languages

COMMON LANGUAGES

Language	Who Speaks It
Common	Most humanoids
Dwarvish	Dwarves
Elvish	Elves
Giant	Giants, ogres, trolls
Goblin	Bugbears, goblins, hobgoblins
Merran	Merfolk, sahuagin, sirens
Orcish	Orcs
Reptilian	Lizardfolk, viperians
Sylvan	Centaur, dryads, faeries
Thanian	Minotaurs, beastmen, manticores

RARE LANGUAGES

Language	Who Speaks It
Celestial	Angels
Diabolic	Demons, devils
Draconic	Dragons
Primordial	Elder things, elementals

“Language is the key to the most important doors.”

-Creeg, human wizard

Deities

The many gods of the universe are the personifications of Law, Chaos, and Neutrality.

The most well-known gods are listed here. A character may worship any deity, or none.

Priests must choose one god to serve faithfully. A priest's deity can revoke the gift of spellcasting if the priest commits blasphemous acts.

Most folk worship one of **The Four Lords**, the lawful and neutral gods who stand for justice, order, and mercy.

Malevolent beings worship one of **The Dark Trio**, chaotic deities who evince power, destruction, and cruelty.

There were once nine primary gods, but two are **The Lost**, forbidden or forgotten. Many folk still refer to The Nine in the oaths they swear, and ancient stories always begin with, "Beneath the Eyes of The Nine..."

SAINT TERRAGNIS (LAWFUL)

A legendary knight who is the patron of most lawful humans. She ascended to godhood long ago and is the embodiment of righteousness and justice.

GEDE (NEUTRAL)

The god of feasts, mirth, and the wilds. Gede is usually peaceful, but primal storms rage when her anger rises. Many elves and halflings worship her.

MADEERA THE COVENANT (LAWFUL)

Madeera was the first manifestation of Law. She carries every law of reality, a dictate called the Covenant, written on her skin in precise symbols.

ORD (NEUTRAL)

Ord the Unbending, the Wise, the Secret-Keeper. He is the god of magic, knowledge, secrets, and equilibrium.

MEMNON (CHAOTIC)

Memnon was the first manifestation of Chaos. He is Madeera's twin, a red-maned, leonine being whose ultimate ambition is to rend the cosmic laws of the Covenant from his sister's skin.

SHUNE THE VILE (CHAOTIC)

Shune whispers arcane secrets to sorcerers and witches who call to her in the dark hours. She schemes to displace Ord so she can control the vast flow of magic herself.

RAMLAAT (CHAOTIC)

Ramlaat is the Pillager, the Barbaric, the Horde. Many orcs worship him and live by the Blood Rite, a prophecy that says only the strongest will survive a coming doom.

THE LOST (?)

Two of The Nine are lost to the ages, their names expunged from history and memory. Yet their whispered legend lingers on in ancient, forbidden texts and secret, deep places...



Gear

Arrows. Ammunition for shortbows or longbows.

Backpack. Holds all the gear you can carry. Don't lose it.

Caltrops. Tiny, triangle-shaped iron spikes. Living creatures who step on caltrops take 1 damage and can only move at half speed for 10 rounds.

Coin. One gold piece (**gp**) is worth 10 silver pieces (**sp**) or 100 copper pieces (**cp**).

Crossbow bolts. Ammunition for crossbows.

Crowbar. Grants advantage on checks to pry open stuck objects.

Flask or bottle. Glass containers that hold one draught of liquid.

Flint and steel. A small fire starter. With it, routine attempts to light a fire always succeed.

Gem. Gems come in numerous varieties and are very valuable.

Grappling hook. A rope anchor with three curved tines.

Iron spikes. Strong spikes. Each has a hole for threading rope. Can be hammered in with weapons or other iron spikes.

Lantern. Casts light up to a double near distance (see Light, pg. 46). Requires oil. Has a shutter to hide the light.

Mirror. A small, polished mirror.

Oil flask. Fuels a lantern for one hour of real time. One flask covers a close area and burns for 4 rounds, dealing 1d4 damage each round.

Pole. Wooden, 10' long.

Rations. One day of food and water supply for one person.

Rope. Hemp, 60' long.

Torch. Sheds light to a near distance (see Light Sources, pg. 46). Burns for one hour of real time.

BASIC GEAR

Item	Cost	Quantity Per Gear Slot
Arrows (20)	1 gp	1-20
Backpack	2 gp	1 (first one free to carry)
Caltrops (one bag)	5 sp	1
Coin	Varies	100 (first 100 free to carry)
Crossbow bolts (20)	1 gp	1-20
Crowbar	5 sp	1
Flask or bottle	3 sp	1
Flint and steel	5 sp	1
Gem	Varies	1-10
Grappling hook	1 gp	1
Iron spikes (10)	1 gp	1-10
Lantern	5 gp	1
Mirror	10 gp	1
Oil, flask	5 sp	1
Pole	5 sp	1
Rations (3)	5 sp	1-3
Rope, 60'	1 gp	1
Torch	5 sp	1

GEAR SLOTS

You can carry a number of items equal to your Strength stat or 10, whichever is higher.

Unless noted, all gear besides typical clothing fills one **gear slot**. Gear that is hard to transport might fill more than one slot.

CRAWLING KIT

A crawling kit costs 7 gp. It uses 7 gear slots and contains the following items.

CRAWLING KIT			
Items	Quantity	Gear Slots	Total Cost
Backpack	1	0	2 gp
Flint and steel	1	1	5 sp
Torch	2	2	1 gp
Rations	3	1	5 sp
Iron spikes	10	1	1 gp
Grappling hook	1	1	1 gp
Rope, 60'	1	1	1 gp

ARMOR				
Item	Cost	Gear Slots	AC	Properties
Leather armor	10 gp	1	11 + DEX mod	-
Chainmail	60 gp	2	13 + DEX mod	Disadv on stealth, swim
Plate mail	130 gp	3	15	No swim, disadv stealth
Shield	10 gp	1	+2	Occupies one hand
Mithral (metal armor only)	x4	-1	-	No penalty stealth, swim

WEAPONS

Weapon	Cost	Type	Range	Damage	Properties
Bastard sword	10 gp	M	C	1d8/1d10	V, 2 slots
Club	5 cp	M	C	1d4	-
Crossbow	8 gp	R	F	1d6	2H, L
Dagger	1 gp	M/R	C/N	1d4	F, Th
Greataxe	10 gp	M	C	1d8/1d10	V, 2 slots
Greatsword	12 gp	M	C	1d12	2H, 2 slots
Javelin	5 sp	M/R	C/F	1d4	Th
Longbow	8 gp	R	F	1d8	2H
Longsword	9 gp	M	C	1d8	-
Mace	5 gp	M	C	1d6	-
Shortbow	6 gp	R	F	1d4	2H
Shortsword	7 gp	M	C	1d6	-
Spear	5 sp	M/R	C/N	1d6	Th
Staff	5 sp	M	C	1d4	2H
Warhammer	10 gp	M	C	1d10	2H

Finesse (F). You may use your STR or DEX when attacking with this weapon.

Loading (L). You must forgo moving to reload this weapon.

Thrown (Th). You may throw this weapon to make a ranged attack with it using STR or DEX.

Two-handed (2H). You must use this weapon with two hands.

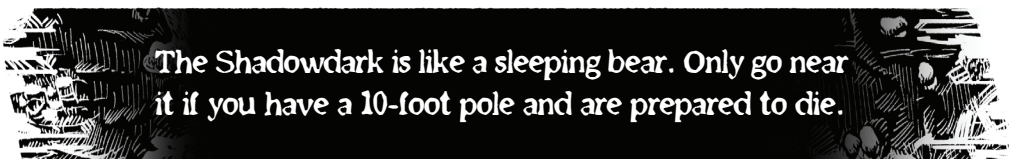
Versatile (V). You can use this weapon with one or two hands. Use the higher damage die if you're wielding it with two.

Weapon types. Melee weapons (M) strike at arm's reach, and ranged weapons (R) strike at a distance.

Range. You can use a weapon at close (C), near (N), or far (F) range (see Distances, pg. 47).



Gameplay



The Shadowdark is like a sleeping bear. Only go near it if you have a 10-foot pole and are prepared to die.

Rolling the Dice

ADVANTAGE

When you have advantage on a roll, it means you're in a strong position to succeed.

For example, you might be attacking from the high ground, or you might have just failed at a task and now have insight into how to succeed if you try again.

To roll with advantage, roll the same die twice and use the better result.

DISADVANTAGE

When you have disadvantage on a roll, it means you're in a strong position to fail.

For example, you might be trying to strike an enemy while blinded by sand, or navigating a maze while confused by disorienting poison.

To roll with disadvantage, roll the same die twice and use the worse result.

CANCELING

If you have both advantage and disadvantage on a roll, they cancel each other out.

NATURAL 20

When a d20 die roll shows a 20, what you're doing succeeds to your maximum capacity. An attack roll automatically hits and is a critical hit (see Damage on pg. 51).

NATURAL 1

When a d20 die roll shows a 1, what you're doing fails to your maximum capacity. An attack roll automatically misses and might even strike an ally.

THE D6 DECIDER

If there's a random chance for an outcome, such as whether a dropped torch goes out, the GM calls for a d6 roll. A 1-3 results in the worse outcome for the players, and a 4-6 results in the better one.

Luck Tokens

Sometimes the GM awards a **luck token** to a player for exceptional roleplaying, heroism, or just plain coolness.

Big sacrifices, moving speeches, or incredibly daring maneuvers might be worthy of luck tokens, whether or not the characters' actions were successful.

Each player can only have one luck token at a time.

You can cash in a luck token to reroll any roll you just made. You must use the new result.

You can also give your luck token to a companion.

HOW MANY TO GIVE?

The GM might award 2-3 new luck tokens per player during the course of a session with a pulpy, heroic feel.

Alternatively, the GM might not give out any new luck tokens during a game session that is grim, difficult, and dark.



Using Stats

Certain tasks fall under specific stats. The following examples illustrate common uses for each one.

The difference between Intelligence and Wisdom can be tricky. If in doubt, remember **Wisdom** is for sensory acuity and instinct, while **Intelligence** covers knowledge and logic.

STRENGTH

- Smashing open locked doors
- Bending the bars of a prison cell or sewer grate
- Lifting a large rock overhead
- Stopping a runaway ship's helm from spinning

DEXTERITY

- Diving away from a trap that flings a hail of needles
- Disabling a tripwire without activating it
- Scaling a sheer castle wall
- Fooling onlookers with sleight of hand tricks

CONSTITUTION

- Holding your breath underwater
- Withstanding intense pain
- Resisting the effects of poison

INTELLIGENCE

- Giving first aid to a dying character
- Recalling the path through a twisting maze
- Finding food and water sources in the wilderness

WISDOM

- Spotting a well-hidden enemy
- Determining the direction of a faint noise or smell
- Deciphering the sounds on the other side of a door

CHARISMA

- Performing ventriloquism
- Applying a disguise
- Rallying allies who are terrified by a monster

Making Checks

WHEN TO ROLL?

Usually, you succeed at what you're trained to do without needing to roll a check.

For example, a wizard is always able to read magical runes, and a thief always finds a trap if searching in the right area.

If you take the time to scan the sky for threats or examine a stretch of wall for a secret door, you simply succeed.

Social encounters usually rely on what you say rather than Charisma checks. Narrating a moving speech or using secret information you gathered to influence an NPC does not require a check to succeed.

The GM asks for a check when the following is true:

- The action has a **negative consequence** for failure
- The action requires **skill**
- There is **time pressure**

DIFFICULTY CLASS

The four standard DCs represent how difficult an action is.

Easy, DC 9. Leaping a narrow chasm, sneaking up on an inattentive guard.

Normal, DC 12. Kicking open a stuck door, picking a poor lock.

Hard, DC 15. Swimming against a strong current, giving first aid to stop a character from dying.

Extreme, DC 18. Climbing a slippery cliff one-handed, restraining a frenzied lion.

CONTESTED CHECKS

If multiple creatures are working against each other on a conflicting task, a contested check decides who succeeds.

To make a contested check, each participant rolls one relevant stat check at the same time, even if it's not their turn. The highest result wins (reroll ties).

Time

REAL TIME

Time passes in the game world at the same pace it's passing in the real world. One minute or hour of game time is equal to one minute or hour in real time.

This matters for tracking light sources, because most light sources only last for one hour of real time.

If you can't track real time in your game, assume one hour is equal to 10 rounds.

TURNS AND ROUNDS

A **turn** is a player's moment to describe what their character does to the GM. Players act one by one on each of their turns.

Some turns need a bit of room to breathe. A character who is speaking with someone can make a few reasonable exchanges back and forth.

A **round** completes when each person has taken one turn.

TIME PASSES

Every moment in the game doesn't have to be accounted for in real time.

For example, if the characters want to spend 10 minutes examining a room from top to bottom, the GM and players can agree that time passes.

When time passes, the GM and players move any timers down by that amount.

Minutes Pass. Effects with a duration of rounds expire. The GM rolls one random encounter check that occurs on a 1-3 on a d6 while this time is passing.

Hours/Days Pass. Effects with a duration shorter than the time passed expire. The GM uses overland travel rules to check for encounters (see *Game Master Quickstart Guide*, pg. 14).

After resolving encounters, the game world fast-forwards to the new point in time.

Turn Order

INITIATIVE

Shadowdark RPG is played in turn order right from the start.

At the beginning of the game, the GM establishes **initiative**, or the order in which the players act. Everyone rolls a d20 and adds their DEX modifier. The GM adds the highest DEX modifier of any monsters, if relevant.

The person who rolled the highest takes the first turn, and the turn order moves clockwise from that individual.

FREEFORM MODE

Initiative need not be strict; some GMs keep only a loose round-robin, allowing the players to decide their turn order and actions before circling back to the GM's turn.

Players might declare their actions as a group or act simultaneously, and the GM will need to adjudicate. A round passes once everyone has acted.

PLAYER TURN

1. The player counts down any personal timers for spells and other effects.
2. The player takes an action and may move up to near (split up in any way). The player can move near again if skipping an action.
3. The GM describes what happens as a result of the player's turn.

GM TURN

1. The GM counts down any timers not tracked by players.
2. The GM checks for a random encounter, if needed.
3. The GM takes actions and makes movements for any relevant creatures or environmental effects.
4. The GM describes what the characters notice as a result of steps 1-3.

Crawling

Characters are in **crawling rounds** while not in combat.

THE SHADOWDARK

The Shadowdark is any place where darkness, danger, and myth reign supreme.

It could be among the crumbling ruins buried inside a forgotten mountain stronghold.

It could be within the spellwrought castle of an undead sorcerer who probes the universe for arcane secrets.

It could be beneath the cursed trees where squirming abominations boil out of a black pit, pulping all in their path.

VISION

All characters need light to see, but that's not true for the darkness-adapted beings of the Shadowdark.

Any area outside the characters' light sources is in total darkness.

LIGHT SOURCES

Most light sources last for up to an hour of real time and illuminate a limited area.

New light sources lit while another is already active "ride along" on the current timer.

That said, the GM should use their best discretion and avoid being punitive; if there isn't much time left on the current timer and the characters light a new torch, snuff out all old light sources and start a new timer.

There should only be one active light timer except in rare cases.

TOTAL DARKNESS

While in total darkness, a creature who is not darkness-adapted has disadvantage on most tasks it tries to undertake, as determined by the GM.

Also, the environment becomes **deadly**. Check for a random encounter every crawling round.

MOVEMENT

Distances. Distances are broken up into **close** (5 feet), **near** (up to 30 feet), and **far** (within sight during an encounter or scene).

Climbing. Strength or Dexterity check to climb half your speed. Fall if you fail by 5+ points.

Falling. You take 1d6 damage for every 10 feet you fall.

Moving Through. You can move freely through allies. You must pass a Strength or Dexterity check to move through enemies.

Swimming. Swim at half speed (STR check in rough water). Hold breath for rounds equal to CON mod (min. 1). Then, CON check each round or 1d6 damage per round until you exit the hazard.

REGROUP

During crawling rounds, the GM can allow the players to **regroup**. PCs within reasonable reach of each other can come together into a marching order. They can also move as a group, taking a round each time. When needed, initiative shifts back to turns.

CONDITIONS

Some effects impose a condition on a character, such as blindness or immobility. Advantage and disadvantage apply to most situations. Use common sense.

For example, a blinded character has disadvantage on tasks requiring sight, and a PC stuck in a spider web can't move.

ACTIONS

While crawling, characters can take actions that might include:

- Prying a gem from a statue
- Sneaking up on a slumbering manticores
- Tapping on a suspicious wall to check for a hidden door
- Scanning a room for signs of hidden enemies
- Giving a rousing speech to a group of fearful townsfolk

ENCOUNTERS

An encounter occurs when any challenge presents itself that stops the characters' progress. See the GM Guide for more on **random encounters**.

Resting

RESTING

Injured or unconscious PCs can rest to recover from their wounds. To rest, a character must sleep for 8 hours and consume (or be fed) a ration.

Sleep can be broken up for light and routine tasks, such as taking a turn on watch.

Interruption. Each stressful interruption of rest (including combat) requires an affected character to make a DC 12 Constitution check.

On a failure, the character consumes a ration but gains no benefit from resting.

Success. A character who successfully rests regains all lost hit points and recovers any stat damage (all stat damage is temporary unless described otherwise).

Additionally, some talents, spells, or items regain their ability to be used after a successful rest.

DANGER LEVEL

Characters can rest anywhere, but doing so inside a dungeon or perilous environment carries a high chance of failure due to the risk of a random encounter.

While the characters are resting in a dangerous environment, the Game Master checks for random encounters using the overland travel cadence:

Unsafe. Check every 3 hours.

Risky. Check every 2 hours.

Deadly. Check every hour.

CAMPFIRE

In many cases, adventurers need a light source while resting. Characters can combine three torches into a campfire that can't be moved once lit.

A campfire lasts up to 8 hours while at least one character remains near to it, and it casts light out to a near distance.

Stealth and Surprise

HIDING AND SNEAKING

Creatures who are hiding or sneaking must succeed on Dexterity checks to go undetected by other creatures within eyesight or earshot.

The GM determines the frequency and difficulty of the check based on the environment.

The GM might secretly roll the check for a character if knowledge of the outcome impacts the situation.

Hiding Limitations. Creatures can't hide while other creatures are able to see them, even at a casual glance.

It might also be impossible to hide if there's nowhere for a creature to stay out of sight.



DETECTING

Detecting a hiding or sneaking creature requires the searcher to actively look or listen.

Looking in the right place automatically reveals a hidden creature. Otherwise, the searcher must succeed on a Wisdom check to perceive a sneaking or hiding creature.

SURPRISE

A creature who begins its turn undetected has the advantage of surprise. If combat hasn't started yet, those with surprise take one turn before the combat initiative roll (see Combat Initiative! on pg. 50).

A creature has advantage on attack rolls against surprised targets.

Attacking from hiding gives away the attacker's position afterwards unless the GM determines otherwise.

Combat

When a fight breaks out, **combat rounds** begin!

DETERMINE SURPRISE

The GM determines if any creatures are unaware of each other. A creature who surprises another takes one turn before a new initiative order is rolled.

COMBAT INITIATIVE!

After surprise turns, the GM calls for new initiative. Everyone makes a Dexterity check (the GM uses the highest Dexterity modifier of any monsters).

The person with the highest result takes the first turn. Turns go clockwise from that person.

COMBAT TURNS

Characters can take one action and move near on their turn, splitting up the movement however they want. Characters can move near again if they don't take an action.

ACTIONS

Melee Attack. Melee attacks use melee weapons. Roll 1d20 + your Strength modifier + talent bonuses. You hit the target if your total is equal to or greater than its AC.

Ranged Attack. Ranged attacks use ranged weapons. Roll 1d20 + your Dexterity modifier + talent bonuses. You hit the target if your total is equal to or greater than its AC.

Cast A Spell. Casting a spell takes one action (see Spellcasting on pg. 52).

Improvise. Do an improvised action, such as swinging across a ravine on a vine. The GM might determine it requires a check or attack roll.

Multitask. Characters can do small, parallel tasks on their turns, such as standing up, speaking, activating a magic item, or quaffing a potion. This doesn't typically use their action.

DAMAGE

When you hit a target with an attack or spell, you damage it. Roll your weapon or spell's damage dice + relevant bonuses. The GM subtracts that amount from the target's hit points.

Knockout. You can choose to knock a creature unconscious instead of killing it if you reduce it to 0 hit points.

Critical Hit. You deal a critical hit if you roll a natural 20 on an attack roll or spellcasting check. For a **weapon**, double its damage dice on the attack. For a **spell**, you may double one of its numerical effects (see pg. 53).

TERRAIN

Attacking or casting a spell on a creature that is hiding at least half its body behind interposing terrain has disadvantage.

If you can't see a creature at all due to terrain, you can't target it.

Creatures can only move half the normal distance through terrain that hampers free movement, such as ice or deep mud.

MORALE

Enemies who are reduced to half their number (or half their HP for a solo enemy) **flee** if they fail a DC 15 Wisdom check. For large groups, the GM makes one check with the leader's modifier.

DEATH

A character who goes to 0 HP falls unconscious and is **dying**. A character who goes above 0 HP wakes up and is no longer dying.

Death Timer. A dying character rolls 1d4 + their CON modifier (minimum 1 total) on their turn. They die in that many rounds unless healed or stabilized.

On each of the character's subsequent turns, that player rolls a d20. On a natural 20, the character rises with 1 hit point.

Stabilize. An intelligent being can give first aid to a dying creature at close range. On a successful DC 15 INT check, the target stops dying but is still unconscious; see Resting, pg. 48.

Death. A character who perishes is retired from the game.

Casting Spells

Spellcasters use the raw power of creation and destruction to bend reality, shaping it to the will of their gods or ambitions.

Wizard magic is fickle, complicated, and volatile. Even the most learned mages tread carefully when reaching beyond the veil to grasp arcane energies.

Priest magic is miraculous, sacred, and instinctive. Priests who offend their gods might lose the ability to cast spells until they can undertake penance.



SPELLCASTING

When you **cast** a spell, you invoke magic to cause an effect. Casting a spell takes your action.

Characters with the spellcasting talent can cast spells.

To cast a **wizard** spell you know, make a spellcasting check by rolling 1d20 + your Intelligence modifier.

To cast a **priest** spell you know, make a spellcasting check by rolling 1d20 + your Wisdom modifier.

The **DC** to successfully cast a spell is 10 + the spell's tier.

RESULTS

If you **succeed** on your spellcasting check, the spell takes effect.

If you **fail** your spellcasting check, the spell does not take effect. You can't cast that spell again until you complete a rest.

CRITICAL SUCCESS

If you roll a natural 20 on your spellcasting check, you may double one of the spell's numerical effects. This remains in effect on a **focus** spell (see pg. 56) until your next focus check.

CRITICAL FAILURE

If you roll a natural 1 on your spellcasting check, the spell does not take effect. If it was a **focus** spell, the spell immediately ends (see pg. 56 for more details on focus spells).

Wizard Spell. If the spell was a wizard spell, you can't cast that spell again until you successfully complete a rest. You must also roll on the Wizard Mishap table corresponding to the spell's tier (see pg. 54).

Priest Spell. If the spell was a priest spell, your deity is greatly displeased and revokes its power. You can't cast that spell again until you complete ritualistic penance to your deity and successfully complete a rest.

PENANCE

The GM determines the exact nature of the penance you must undertake based on your deity and alignment.

Penance requires a holy quest, ritualistic atonement, or a material sacrifice that you donate or destroy.

Inadequate or subversive penance (such as donating your sacrifice to a party member) only displeases your deity further and makes the spell loss permanent.

SACRIFICE VALUE	
Spell Tier	Value
1	5 gp
2	20 gp
3	40 gp
4	90 gp
5	150 gp



Wizard Mishaps

WIZARD MISHAP TIER 1-2

d12	Effect
1	Devastation! Roll twice and combine both effects (reroll any further 1s)
2	Explosion! You take 1d8 damage
3	Refraction! You target yourself with the spell
4	Your hand slipped! You target a random ally with the spell
5	Mind wound! You can't cast this spell again for a week
6	Discorporation! One random piece of your gear disappears forever
7	Spell worm! You lose the ability to cast a random spell on each of your turns until you pass a DC 12 Constitution check. You regain the ability to cast those spells after completing a rest
8	Harmonic failure! You lose the ability to cast a random spell until you complete a rest
9	Poof! You suppress all light within a near distance from you, including sunlight and magical light, for 10 rounds
10	The horror! You scream uncontrollably for 3 rounds in Primordial, drawing lots of attention
11	Energy surge! You glow bright purple for 10 rounds, granting enemies advantage on attacks against you
12	Unstable conduit! You have disadvantage on casting spells of the same tier for 10 rounds



Scrolls and Wands

USING SCROLLS AND WANDS

Scrolls and wands contain magic spells. Spellcasters can use them to cast these spells if the spell is on their spell list (even if they don't know the spell).

To do so, they must succeed on a spellcasting check with a DC of **10 + the tier** of the spell contained in the wand or scroll.

Failing to cast a spell from a wand or scroll does not impact the ability to cast known spells.

SCROLLS

After a spellcasting attempt with a scroll, the magical writing disappears from the scroll and it ceases to work. On a **critical failure**, casters with mishap tables must roll a mishap.

WANDS

On a failed casting attempt, the wand stops working until you complete a rest. On a **critical failure**, the wand permanently breaks, and casters with mishap tables must roll a mishap.



Spell Attributes

TIERS

Spells are classified according to their tiers, which range from 1-5.

RANGE

Range determines at what distance (close, near, or far) you can deliver the spell's effects. Self range means you can only target yourself with the spell.

DURATION

Duration is how long the spell effects last. Spells can have an instant effect or last for several turns, rounds, or longer. See Focus for spells with a focus duration.

OVERLAPPING EFFECTS

Ongoing effects of the same spell on the same target do not combine. The spell with the most powerful effect takes precedence, such as the spell with the longer remaining duration.

FOCUS

Some spells last for as long as you focus. You can't cast other focus spells while focusing. You can end a focus spell at any time.

To maintain focus, make a spellcasting check at the start of your turn as if you were casting that spell.

Success. The spell remains in effect until the start of your next turn.

Failure. The spell ends. If you were focusing, you do not lose the ability to cast that spell. However, if you **critically fail** on a check to maintain focus, treat it as a standard critical failure (see pg. 53 for details on criticals).

If you take damage or become distracted while focusing (due to an earthquake, for example), you must immediately make a spellcasting check to maintain focus.