

# D E L V E

## *Adventurer's Guide v1.0*

***Rules for players and gamemasters alike!***

***Gamemasters also need rules found in the Gamemaster's Guide.***

In this game, you play a fantasy adventurer, exploring a dungeon in search of excitement, renown, and treasure. Your adventurer has joined with other adventurers, each played by one of the other players, to take on greater challenges, taking advantage of one another's skills and strengths. One player is the gamemaster, who serves as part narrator, part referee, and controls everything else besides the adventurers. The gamemaster has most of the rules available to him or her to referee the game in the *Gamemaster's Guide* — what is contained here in the *Adventurer's Guide* is just what you need to get through the game. You will face various hazards and unusual encounters on your way to the boss, a powerful monster that waits in the depths of the dungeon, standing between you and the object of your quest.

There are twelve starting adventurer profiles inside the back cover of this booklet, and you may copy the record sheet on the outside of the back cover to keep a record of your adventurer's status as you delve the dungeon. Copy the trait values into their respective spaces, mark the boxes for your Specials, and note that your Level is 1. If you want to create your own adventurer, talk to the gamemaster for more information. Now, let's kick in that door!

### Details and Consequences

One fundamental concept we have to cover first is the idea of *details* and *consequences*. Details are always true things about the world in the game. You and the other players (including the gamemaster) are telling a story together about a group of adventurers and their exploits in a musty ruin filled with peril and treasure. Most of the rules are implicitly about adding details anyway, but on occasion you are specifically given the option to “add a detail.” Details are important because they are the key to causing effects on the game state: these effects are consequences. A mechanical consequence cannot occur without a narrative detail to establish it. You say “The Wizard conjures a wall of fire across the corridor” and, as a result, the way is prepared for inflicting a consequence (such as the loss of 1 Health) for moving through the corridor.

While consequences are largely the province of the gamemaster, you have the right to create details at certain points, and so it's important to discuss three

guiding rules to consider when making up a detail. We'll refer to those rules as the Big Three, because everything else is built from their foundation. ***Be fair, and be believable, but most of all be cool.***

***Fair*** means you shouldn't just, say, slay the dragon by yourself with a single blow as soon as you get into the chamber. Consequences often balance this out: you probably can't take down the dragon in one shot anyway, because the consequences for hitting in combat are already set by the rules. But nonetheless, this rule exists to enforce the balance of consequences. If you get to the end of an action movie and the bad guy falls to the first punch, it's a let-down for the viewers: consider what details do to the enjoyment of all of the players. This rule states that *details can't change traits or icons on your character profile, but can give bonuses to die rolls and make other things happen in the description that creates the world.*

***Believable*** means your details has to fit with the world that all of you have established so far: belief can be suspended to a certain extent (the game happens in a world with magic and monsters, after all), but if you declare that your thoroughly not-magical Dwarf suddenly casts a huge spell, it's going to wreck the tone for everyone. This is also part of being ***fair***, since every adventurer has strengths and weaknesses, and suddenly getting an advantage you didn't have without a reason throws off the balance. This rule states that *the group gets veto power over details if they would wreck the mood, and you have to try again.*

Finally, ***cool*** means whatever cool means to your group. That isn't always being the best at something, or even succeeding at something, but it does always make the story you're telling more fun to take part in. That's why there's a chance of failure or added complications when you take actions. If the detail you're describing would make into the trailer for a movie or a cutscene in a video game, there's a good bet that it qualifies as ***cool***. This rule gives *the gamemaster the ability to reward you with in-game benefits – usually Adventure Points or treasure – for doing things that make the game more fun for everyone.*

## The Traits

There are six numerical ratings, almost always from 1 to 6, for things your adventurer can do. Besides the straightforward use described in their names, there are other related tasks that you may also test for using each of the traits. The gamemaster may ask you to test for other feats besides those listed.



**Strike:** *Used to hit things in hand-to-hand combat.*



**Shoot:** *Used to hit things at a distance.*



**Move:** *Used to make your adventurer go from one place to another.*



**Defense:** *Used to avoid being hurt by something that wants to hurt you: swords, arrows, claws, acid sprays, bursts of flame, and so on.*



**Health:** *Used to track how hurt your adventurer is. You lose points of Health when you're injured, and regain them through healing.*



**Magic:** *If you don't have Spellcasting, you won't often test Magic.*

If your adventurer takes an action, and there would be negative consequences for failure, ask the gamemaster what you need to test.

## Rolling Dice

The gamemaster will handle most of the die rolls, but occasionally you may be asked to make a test (usually “to test [trait name]”). Tests are not for every little thing: you should only make a test when there’s a chance that either failing or something unexpected happening will make the game more fun. Opening a door is not test-worthy; trying to open a door quietly because there’s a troll snoozing on the other side, however, is. You’ll test Defense, Shoot, and Strike most often, but encounters may test any of the traits.

There are two dice: usually one is white and the other is black, but you’re free to use any two contrasting colors so long as you can keep them distinguished consistently. All test rolls use both dice, and you choose the one you want to keep. The other die is usually ignored once you make your pick. Most of the time, when you roll, you are testing a trait, so you add the result of the die you picked to the trait, and if your total is equal to or higher than the difficulty of the action as indicated by the gamemaster, then you succeed.

The color of the die makes no difference as to whether you succeed on your roll or not – that’s purely a function of the numbers – but there are additional things that happen in the game depending on which die you took. On a success, the white die means you get to narrate the specifics, while the black die means the gamemaster gets to narrate instead. However, if you made the roll, you can choose a **hand over**. This means the person who would normally narrate doesn’t, but they get a point to their respective pool in compensation: that means if you succeed on the black die, but choose to **hand over**, then you get to narrate instead of the gamemaster, in exchange for the gamemaster’s Hazard Pool gaining a point.

The reverse is true on failures, and yes, you can choose to fail, if you would prefer to retain control of the narration, or think it would be otherwise useful to the story or the encounter to not succeed. Don’t be afraid to take a failure if you have a **cool** idea for a way to keep the story entertaining for everybody.

## Adventure Points

The most important thing to understand is Adventure Points (AP). You get them when you act the way an adventurer is supposed to act: to wit, when you face down danger in spite of the risks, like venturing forward into the dungeon even when you don't know what's ahead and you're already ragged from fighting. You spend them to do extraordinary things, particularly using a Special, but you can also use them to guide the story of your adventures rather than relying on chance.

There's a Hazard Pool, too, for only the gamemaster to access. You don't need to know too much about it, except that points you spend from the AP go into the HP, and vice versa.

Adventurers don't have individual AP: the party shares the Adventure Pool, and anyone can use it at any time. The Adventure Pool starts with one point per adventurer. You can spend AP to:

- use a Special. Nightsight is the only exception to this - it saves you from paying an AP when Lights Out is declared.
- **force** a dungeon feature instead of *pushing ahead*. You can **force** a new chamber at the end of a previously unexplored passage, for instance, or you can **force** a secret door in a room you thought had been exhausted. The only thing you can't **force** is an exit from the dungeon. The more significant an area you want to **force**, or the deeper in the dungeon it occurs, the more expensive it will be.
- ask for a **hand over** of narration from the gamemaster when you choose the black die on a die roll. This costs 1 AP.
- light your lamps or torches when the gamemaster declares Lights Out. This also takes a full turn. If you've got Nightsight, you don't have to spend either a turn or an AP.
- invoke **heroic resilience**. Once during an encounter, you may restore a point of Health lost due to damage. Your adventurer must be conscious to do this.
- gain a point in Level when you leave the dungeon. [This point is permanently removed from the economy, not given to the gamemaster.]

The Adventure Pool grows over time. The Pool gets more AP when you do the following things:

- **Push ahead**. That means you venture forth into an unknown area and take what comes. The gamemaster will determine what happens, either by spending points (putting them back into the Adventure Pool) or rolling randomly on the dungeon table, which puts new AP added to the Pool. The deeper in the dungeon you go, the more AP you get for **pushing**

### *ahead.*

- When the gamemaster decides to **force** a hazard, one or more AP is added back to the Pool. This comes from the Hazard Pool.
- The gamemaster can offer to pay you an AP from the Hazard Pool to **hand over** the narration when you choose the white die on a die roll.
- Some hazards don't have treasure, but give you AP as a reward for defeating them instead. These also come from the Hazard Pool.

## The Dungeon

The dungeon is an imaginary place that exists in the minds of all of the players and gamemaster. There are a number of important areas in the dungeon: halls and intersections connect areas; stairs lead up or down to the next level of the dungeon (or occasionally out); rooms contain encounters with monsters, traps, treasures, and clues; chambers contain the major encounters, treasure hoards and boss fights.

Areas in the dungeon are either **safe** or **dangerous**. This is determined the first time you enter an area, and stays that way. On occasion, you'll enter what's known as a grey area: it has the potential to be either. Grey areas default to **dangerous** – this is a dungeon, after all! – but the party has the option to **force** it to be **safe** by paying an AP when they first enter the area. Monsters and other hazards can't be encountered in **safe** areas, nor can they pursue you there.

The Adventure Pool goes up and down depending on what happens in the game. The Pool starts with one point per player, and whenever you push ahead, meaning you choose to venture into an unexplored part of the dungeon and take whatever the gamemaster rolls, you get a brand new AP added to the Pool. When AP are spent, they go to the gamemaster so that he or she can use them to complicate your adventure. When the gamemaster throws something at your party, though, those points go right back into the Pool. Points from the Adventure Pool can also be spent to control how the dungeon unfolds: if you're stuck, you can spend points to add corridors or secret doors that lead to further danger, and if you think you're ready for a big confrontation, you can spend a bunch of points to go straight to one of the major chambers where truly terrifying monsters and incredible treasures await.

## Moving, Vision, and Distance

Sometimes you will need or want to know where something is in relation to you. There are four categories of distance: Next To, Close To, Far From, Distant From. That's all you need to worry about, for the most part. Ask the gamemaster how far something is, and you'll get one of those four answers.

The game doesn't use a map. Distance is all relative, and movement involves

increasing or decreasing the distance categories between your adventurer and something else. The faster you want to move in a turn, or the more you want to change the distance between you and something else (which is another way of saying the same thing), the more difficult the Move test. The gamemaster might also make you test for a short move if you're crossing a narrow bridge, running across broken ground, or crossing any difficult space, and there's a risk of something hazardous occurring.

Your characters have torches, lanterns, and other sources of light that let you see in the darkness of the dungeon, but some areas may be larger than your torch can illuminate. If the gamemaster declares Lights Out, your Move drops to 1 unless you've got the Nightsight Special. Each adventurer can spend 1 AP and a turn to re-light.

The gamemaster tells you how big an area is when you enter it. You don't know what's in the dungeon, or where, until you've moved into an area. The gamemaster might give you hints, like sounds or signs of activity, but after your adventurer moves each turn, the gamemaster will Reveal anything that's in your area that isn't Sneaking.

## Fighting

If you're Next To an opponent, you can test Strike to attack; otherwise, you can test Shoot. In either case, make your test and compare it to the Defense of the target. If your result is higher than the target's Defense, the target loses 1 Health. At 0 Health, you are staggered and can take no actions on your own; at the end of a turn, any characters at 0 Health fall unconscious. Unless you're Tough or Regenerate, negative Health means death, for creature or adventurer alike.

If a hazard wants to hit you, you roll a Defense test to come up with the difficulty to hit you. This is an example of an *opposed test*. (NB: Monsters have a pre-determined Defense difficulty and so the gamemaster doesn't have to roll Defense, to speed fights along.)

## Wielding Magic

Most of the magic an adventuring magician carries around is geared toward fighting, since adventuring is a dangerous vocation. If you've got the Spellcasting Special, you can make a Magic test in place of either Strike or Shoot in combat with a monster. This is very useful if your adventurer has a Magic trait much higher than the relevant combat trait, but there's a downside as well: magic goes last in the turn sequence, because it takes time to cast a spell. It also doesn't substitute for a Strike or Shoot test if that's a requirement to overcome a hazard. And, finally, if you lose any Health while you're trying to use your

magic, your preparation is disrupted and you have to try again next turn.

Using magic in combat bears some explanation. You can declare that your Wizard's ranged weapon is a wand of lightning, for instance, and you can zap your foes with lightning bolts all day long: that's still effectively a Shoot test, mechanically no different from using a crossbow or something else. The theme of your details is important for creating the story, but the game function of most equipment is identical regardless of how it's described.

However, magic can do lots of other things, too! There aren't specific spells; instead, if your adventurer has the Spellcasting Special, he or she is assumed to know relevant magic to deal with a situation. Who would let a fresh young novice with one or two spells go wandering in a dangerous tomb? Basically, when you break out a Magic test, you're using Magic as a catch-all "I want to add a detail" ability: if you want to do something in the dungeon, Magic can do it (according to the Big Three, of course; it wouldn't be either *fair* or *cool* to just kill all the monsters and teleport out with the treasure to your private keep, for instance). The gamemaster decides how difficult the test is based on how much your detail would change the dungeon.

## Specials

Each adventurer has two or more Specials. An adventurer can spend an AP to use a Special. Here are what the Specials do:



**Assist:** *When another adventurer makes a test, you may spend 1 AP to make a roll and let that player swap one of your dice for one of theirs of the same color.*



**Burst:** *Your adventurer can hit multiple monsters in the same area with a single Strike, Shoot, or Magic test, at a cost of 1 AP per additional target.*



**Fast:** *You may spend 1 AP to have your adventurer make a second Move at step 5 in the turn sequence.*



**Healer:** *When you invoke **heroic resilience**, you may gain 2 Health. You may spend 1 AP to restore 1 lost Health to another adventurer.*



**Nightsight:** *Your adventurer can act normally even during Lights Out. This Special does not cost an AP to use.*



**Paralyze:** *When your adventurer attacks, you may spend 1 AP to choose that the target loses the ability to Move next turn instead of losing Health.*



**Reach:** *You may spend 1 AP to Strike an enemy that is Near To or Next To your adventurer.*



**Regenerate:** you have no limit on the number of times you can invoke **heroic resilience** in an encounter. When you camp, you regain full Health.



**Shatter:** When your adventurer attacks, you may spend 1 AP to choose that the target loses 1 Defense instead of losing Health.



**Sneak:** You may spend 1 AP to avoid being Revealed at step 2 in the turn sequence.



**Spellcasting:** Your adventurer can cast spells as indicated in the Magic section, either by substituting the Magic trait for another trait in tests, or by testing Magic to add details.



**Strong:** You may spend 1 AP when your adventurer attacks to cause the target to lose 2 Health instead of just 1.



**Tough:** You may spend 1 AP to take 1 fewer Health when hit by an attack. Your adventurer doesn't automatically die below 0 Health; the gamemaster will ask you to test to see if your adventurer can continue.



**Ward:** You may spend 1 AP to make your adventurer immune to an attack made with Magic.

If your adventurer gains the same Special twice (e.g. from a treasure), you get an Improved Special: the gamemaster will tell you what the Improved version does. The Improved Special icons are on your adventurer's sheet directly below the basic icon and distinguished with banners on either side.

### Camping and Healing

When your adventurers are ready to rest and recuperate, you can set up camp. This requires at least a room large enough to comfortably hold your entire party: the gamemaster will tell you if a given area is sufficient. Camping gives every adventurer a chance to tend to their wounds: the gamemaster will tell you how much Health you can regain when you break camp. This form of healing does not cost AP, unlike **heroic resilience** or the Healer Special.

Your party enters the dungeon with sufficient supplies to make camp twice per player; extending your stay beyond that is risky. Camping without sufficient material means adventurers don't have the rest or safety to regain Health. Adventurers who aren't lucky enough to find more supplies in the dungeon may need to leave the dungeon to restock.

### Exiting the Dungeon and Gaining Level

If you find an exit, the adventurers may leave the dungeon directly. It's all for one and one for all in the dungeon: the party decides whether to leave as a group or stay as a group. Adventurers may also exit the dungeon by returning

to the entry, or via any stairs upward located on the first level (unless the dungeon has a tower or some other above-ground areas). Unlike most dungeon features, you can't *force* an exit with AP.

Leaving the dungeon gives you the option to go up in Level: spend an AP permanently from your pool to add a point to your Level. You can only go up in Level once per exit discovered.

That covers all that players need to know to play!

*Delve Adventurer's Guide* v1.0

February 15, 2013

*The DELVE Adventurer's Guide is always free to download, print, and play. (Hint: Print this file booklet-style on both sides of 3 sheets of letter paper.)*

*Check out [parenthesispress.com](http://parenthesispress.com) for the latest version.*

*Want to take command of the dungeon? The DELVE Gamemaster's Guide has all the information you need to take command of the dungeon. Buy a copy at [Distribyly!](http://Distribyly.com)*

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*Thanks to the playtesters: Kane Bergman, Chris Clouser, Adam Colton, Jonathan Davis, Tyler Garner, Katie Meares, Drach-Mark Meinel, Matthew Levi Miller, Richard Mottern, Justin Nowaczyk, Taran Price, and all those who came to play at Gen Con and Metatopia whose name I didn't get.*

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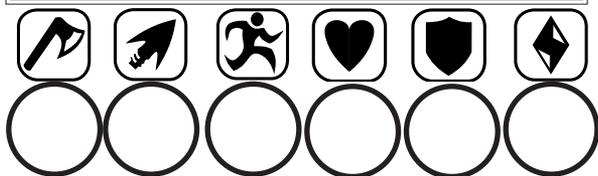
# DELVE

*Quick Reference Page*

TRAIT ICONS	TURN SEQUENCE	ADVENTURE POINTS	SPECIAL ICONS
	1. Move	You earn AP for...	
	2. Reveal	• <i>handing over narration on the white die</i>	
	3. Pick Up Items	• <i>defeating hazards</i>	
	4. Shoot	You add AP to the game for...	
	5. Fast	• <i>pushing ahead</i>	
	6. Strike	You can spend AP to...	
	7. Spell	• <i>force a dungeon feature (chamber, secret door, etc.)</i>	
		• <i>use a special</i>	
		• <i>call for a handover of narration on the black die</i>	
		• <i>add a detail</i>	
		• <i>invoke heroic resilience</i>	
			
			
			

ADVENTURER

LEVEL



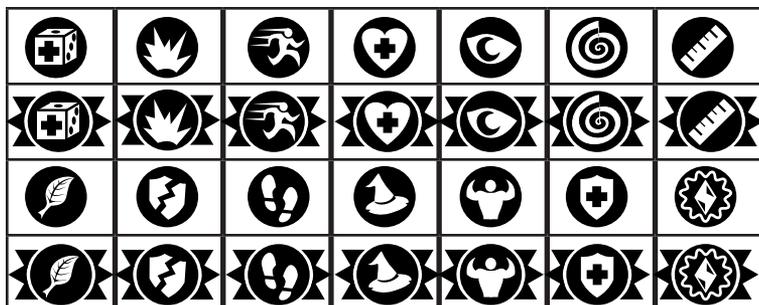
RANGED WEAPON

HAND-TO-HAND WEAPON

DEFENSIVE ITEM

TREASURE

SPECIALS



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L  
V  
E

Elf  

- 3 
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- 6 
- 1 
- 2 
- 4 

Dwarf  

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- 6 
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Ranger  

- 3 
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Viking  

- 5 
- 6 
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- 1 

Berserker  

- 5 
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Thief  

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Necromancer  

- 2 
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Shieldmaiden  

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Swashbuckler  

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Wizard  

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Knight  

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Bard  

- 2 
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