

PLAYING THE GAME

Playing Dungeon World means having a conversation; somebody says something, then you reply, maybe someone else chimes in. We talk about the fiction — the world of the characters and the things that happen around them. As we play, the rules will chime in, too. They have something to say about the world. There are no turns or rounds in Dungeon World, no rules to say whose turn it is to talk. Instead players take turns in the natural flow of the conversation, which always has some back-and-forth. The GM says something, the players respond. The players ask questions or make statements, the GM tells them what happens next. Dungeon World is never a monologue; it's always a conversation.

The rules help shape the conversation of play. While the GM and the players are talking, the rules and the fiction are talking, too. Every rule has an explicit fictional trigger that tells you when it is meant to come into the conversation.

Like any conversation, the time you spend listening is just as important as the time you spend talking. The details established by the other people at the table (the GM and the other players) are important to you: they might change what moves you can make, set up an opportunity for you, or create a challenge you have to face. The conversation works best when we all listen, ask questions, and build on each other's contributions.

ABILITY SCORES AND MODIFIERS

Many of the rules in this chapter rely on a player character's abilities and their modifiers. The abilities are Strength, Constitution, Dexterity, Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma. They measure a player character's raw ability in each of those areas on a scale from 3 to 18, where 18 is the peak of mortal ability.

Each ability has a modifier associated with it that is used when rolling with that ability. These are written as three-letter abbreviations: Str, Con, Dex, Int, Wis, Cha. Modifiers range from -3 to +3. The modifier is always derived from the current ability score.

SCORE	MODIFIER
1-3	-3
4-5	-2
6-8	-1
9-12	0
13-15	+1
16-17	+2
18	+3

MAKING MOVES

The most basic unit of rules in Dungeon World is the move. Moves are rules that tell you when they trigger and what effect they have. A move depends on a fictional action and always has some fictional effect. "Fictional" means that the action and effect come from the world of the characters we're describing.

When a player describes their character doing something that triggers a move, that move happens and its rules apply. If the move requires a roll, its description will tell you what dice to roll and how to read their results.

A character can't take the fictional action that triggers a move without that move occurring. For example, if Isaac tells the GM that his character dashes past a crazed axe-wielding orc to the open door, he makes the Defy Danger move because its trigger is "when you act despite an imminent threat." Isaac can't just describe his character running past the orc without making the Defy Danger move, and he can't make the Defy Danger move without acting despite an imminent threat or suffering a calamity. The moves and the fiction go hand-in-hand.

Everyone at the table should listen for when moves apply. If it's ever unclear if a move has been triggered, everyone should work together to clarify what's happening. Ask questions of everyone involved until everyone sees the situation the same way, then roll the dice, or don't, as the situation requires.

The GM's monsters, NPCs, and other assorted beastsies also have moves, but they work differently.

MOVES AND DICE

Most moves include the phrase "roll+x" where "x" is one of your character's ability modifiers. Unless the move tells you otherwise, that "roll" always means that you roll two six-sided dice and add their results to the value of the modifier. Some moves will have you add some other value to your roll instead of an ability modifier.

The results always fall into three basic categories. A total of 10 or higher (written 10+) is the best outcome. A total of 7-9 is still a success but it comes with compromises or cost. A 6 or lower is trouble, but you also get to mark XP.

Each move will tell you what happens on a 10+ and a 7-9. Most moves won't say what happens on a 6-, that's up to the GM, but you also always mark XP.

Damage rolls work a little differently. They use different dice depending on who or what is dealing damage.

MOVES AND EQUIPMENT

The most important role of a character's equipment is to help describe the moves they make. A character without a weapon of some sort isn't going to trigger the Hack and Slash move when fighting a dragon, since a bare-knuckle punch really doesn't do much to inch-thick scales. It doesn't count for the purposes of triggering the move.

Likewise, sometimes equipment will avoid triggering a move. Climbing a sheer icy cliff is usually Defying Danger, but with a good set of climbing gear you might be able to avoid the imminent danger or calamity that triggers the move.

Weapons are particularly likely to modify what moves you can trigger. A character with a dagger can easily stab the goblin gnawing on his leg, triggering Hack and Slash, but the character with a halberd is going to have a much harder time bringing it to bear on such a close foe.

Items and gear of every sort have tags. Tags are terms to describe things. Some tags have a specific effect on the rules (things like damage reduction on armor or a magical bonus to a particular kind of move or stat). Other tags are purely about the fiction (like the close tag, which describes the length of a weapon and how near your enemies need to be for you to attack them). Tags help you describe your character's actions when the items are being used and they give the GM information about how the items you're using might go wrong or cause complications when you fail a roll.

THE EFFECTS OF MOVES

The effects of moves are always about the fictional world the characters inhabit. A 10+ on Hack and Slash doesn't just mean the mechanical effects, it means you successfully attacked something and did some type of harm to it.

Once you've figured out what the effects of the move are, apply them to the fiction and go back to the conversation. Always return to what's going on in the game.

Some moves have immediate mechanical effects, like dealing damage or giving someone a bonus to their next roll. These effects are always a reflection of the fictional world the characters are in; make sure to use the fiction when describing the effects of the move.

Some moves use the phrase "deal damage." Dealing damage means you roll the damage dice for your class; sometimes your weapon will add or subtract damage too. You use your damage dice any time you make an attack that could reasonably hurt your target. Usually that means you're wielding a weapon, but your fists can be weapons with the right training or an interesting situation.

Some say "take +1 forward." That means to take +1 to your next move roll (not damage). The bonus can be greater than +1, or even a penalty, like -1. There also might be a condition, such as "take +1 forward to Hack and Slash," in which case the bonus applies only to the next time you roll Hack and Slash, not any other move.

Some say "take +1 ongoing." That means to take +1 to all move rolls (not damage). The bonus can be larger than +1, or it can be a penalty, like -1. There also might be a condition, such as "take +1 ongoing to Volley." An ongoing bonus also says what causes it to end, like "until you dismiss the spell" or "until you atone to your deity."

Some give you "hold." Hold is currency that allows you to make some choices later on by spending the hold as the move describes. Hold is always saved up for the move that generated it; you can't spend your hold from Defend on Trap Expert or vice versa, for example.

Some present a choice. The choice you make, like all move effects, dictates things that happen in the fiction in addition to any more mechanical effects. The choice you make on the 10+ result of Hack and Slash to deal more damage at the cost of opening yourself up is exactly what's happening to your character: they have enough advantage that they can stay safe or push their luck.

Some give you a chance to say something about your character and their history. When you Spout Lore you may get asked how you know the information that the GM reveals. Take that opportunity to contribute to the game and show who your character really is. Just keep in mind the established facts and don't contradict anything that's already been described.

Some say "mark XP." That means you add one to your current XP total.

HARM AND HEALING

Cuts, bruises, and mortal wounds are common dangers for adventurers to face in Dungeon World. In the course of play, characters will take damage, heal, and maybe even die. A character's health is measured by their hit points (HP). Damage subtracts from HP. In the right conditions, or with medical or magical help, damage is healed and HP is restored.

HP. A character's HP is a measure of their stamina, endurance, and health. More HP means the character can fight longer and endure more trauma before facing Death's cold stare. Your class tells your maximum HP. Your Constitution (the ability, not the modifier) comes into play as well, so more Constitution means more HP. If your Constitution permanently changes during play you adjust your HP to reflect your new Constitution score. Unless your Constitution changes your maximum HP stays the same.

Damage. When a character takes damage they subtract the damage dealt from their current HP. Armor mitigates damage; if a character has armor they subtract its value from the damage dealt. This might mean a blow is turned away completely — that's fine, it's what armor is for! Damage can never take a character below 0 HP.

Damage is determined by the attacker. Player characters deal damage according to their class, the weapon used, and the move they've made. If a move just says "deal damage" the character rolls their class's damage dice plus any bonuses or penalties from moves, weapons, or effects. If a move specifies an amount of damage, use that in place of the class's damage roll. Monsters roll damage as listed in their description. Use this damage any time the monster takes direct action to hurt someone, even if they use a method other than their normal attack.

Other sources of damage — like being struck by a chunk of a collapsing tower, or falling into a pit — are left to the GM based on these options:

- ♦ It threatens bruises and scrapes at worst: d4 damage
- ♦ It's likely to spill some blood, but nothing horrendous: d6 damage
- ♦ It might break some bones: d8 damage
- ♦ It could kill a common person: d10 damage

Add the *ignores armor* tag if the source of the damage is particularly large or if the damage comes from magic or poison. Temporary or circumstantial armor works the same way as armor that you wear: 1 armor for partial cover, 2 armor for major cover.

Damage is dealt based on the fiction. Moves that deal damage, like Hack and Slash, are just a special case of this: the move establishes that damage is being dealt in the fiction. Damage can be assigned even when no move is made, if it follows from the fiction. HP loss is often only part of the effect. If the harm is generalized, like falling into a pit, losing the HP is probably all there is to it. When the harm is specific, like an orc pulling your arm from its socket, HP should be part of the effect but not the entirety of it. Likewise having your head chopped off is not HP damage, it's just you being dead.

Damage From Multiple Creatures. It's a brave monster that goes into battle alone. If multiple creatures attack at once, roll the highest damage among them and add +1 damage for each monster beyond the first.

Stun Damage. Stun damage is non-lethal damage. A PC who takes stun damage is defying danger to do anything at all, the danger being "you're stunned." This lasts as long as makes sense in the fiction. A GM character that takes stun damage doesn't count it against their HP but will act accordingly, staggering around for a few seconds, fumbling blindly, etc.

Adding and Subtracting Damage. When a move tells you to add damage, you add that damage to the roll on the dice; if it tells you to add extra dice, roll them and add the result. The same goes for subtracting: subtract the number, or the rolled result of a subtracted dice, from the total. Damage never goes negative — 0 damage is the minimum.

Best and Worst. Some monsters and moves have you roll damage multiple times and take the best or worst result. Roll as normal but only apply the best (or worst) result. If a monster rolls its d6 damage twice and takes the best result, it's written b[2d6] — the b[] means "best." Likewise w[] means worst, so w[3d10] means "roll a d10 for damage three times and use the worst result."

Healing. There are two sources of healing: medical aid and the passage of time. Medical aid, both magical and mundane, heals damage according to the move or item used. Whenever a character spends some time resting without doing anything to aggravate their wounds they heal, as described in Make Camp (a night in a dangerous area) or Recover (stays in civilization). No matter the source of healing, HP can never increase above maximum.

Death. Death stalks the edges of every battle. A character reduced to 0 HP immediately takes their Last Breath. Death comes for commoner and king alike — no stat is added to the Last Breath roll. Depending on the outcome, the character may become stable: stable characters stay at 0 HP but are alive and unconscious. If they receive healing they regain consciousness and may return to battle or seek safety. If a stable character takes damage again, they draw their Last Breath once more.

After Death. If your character dies you can ask the GM and the other players to try and resurrect you; the GM will tell them what it will cost. The Resurrection spell is a special case, giving an easier path back, but the GM still has a say. No matter the prospects of resurrection, for now you make a new character, at level 1, as you normally would. If your original character returns to life you can play either character, switching between them as makes sense.

Debilities. Losing HP is general — fatigue, bruises, cuts. Some wounds are deeper. These are debilities:

- ♦ **Weak (STR):** You can't exert much force. Maybe it's just fatigue and injury, or maybe your strength was drained by magic.
- ♦ **Shaky (DEX):** You're unsteady on your feet and you've got a shake in your hands.
- ♦ **Sick (CON):** Something just isn't right inside. Maybe you've got a disease or a wasting illness. Maybe you just drank too much ale last night and it's coming back to haunt you.
- ♦ **Stunned (INT):** That last knock to the head shook something loose. Brain not work so good.
- ♦ **Confused (WIS):** Ears ringing. Vision blurred. You're more than a little out of it.
- ♦ **Scarred (CHA):** It may not be permanent, but for now you don't look so good.

Each debility is tied to an ability and gives you -1 to that ability's modifier (the score itself is unaffected, so max HP doesn't change with Sick). You can only have each debility once. Debilities are harder to heal than HP — some high-level magic can do it, but your best bet is safety and a few days' rest (see Recover). Debilities don't replace descriptions and the established fiction: losing an arm means you have one less arm, not just "Weak."

MAGIC

Dungeon World is a fantastic place: there's more to it than mud, blood, and ale in the tavern. Fire and wind conjured from the pure elements. Prayers for health, might, and divine retribution. "Magic" is the name given to those abilities not derived from the strength of man and beast but from forces beyond. The druid's ability to take the shape of an animal is magic, as are the practiced effects of the wizard and the divine blessings of the cleric. Any ability that goes beyond the physically possible is magical.

Spells. Some classes, like the cleric and the wizard, have access to spells: specific magical effects that are the benefit of divine servitude or severe study. Each spell has a name, tags, a level, and an effect. The basic flow of magic is to know, prepare, cast, and forget a spell.

Known spells are those a spellcaster has mastered enough to prepare. The cleric knows all cleric spells of their level or lower, including their rites. The wizard starts knowing their cantrips and three 1st level spells, and learns a new spell each level, stored in their spellbook.

Even if a spellcaster knows a spell, they must have it prepared before they can cast it. With some time and concentration (Commune or Prepare Spells), the spellcaster may choose known spells whose total levels are less than or equal to the caster's level plus 1 to prepare. The wizard always prepares their cantrips; the cleric always prepares their rites.

Casting a spell involves calling on a deity, chanting, waving one's hands, invoking mystical forces, and so on, usually via the Cast a Spell move. On a 10+ the spell takes effect; on a 7-9 the caster finds themselves in trouble and must make a choice, but the spell is still cast. Some spells are ongoing — once cast, they continue to have effect until something ends them. One option on a 7-9 is to have the spell revoked or forgotten: it's still known, but no longer prepared, until the caster next Prepares or Communes.

CHARACTER CHANGE

Dungeon World is ever-changing, and the characters change too. As adventures progress, player characters gain experience (XP), which lets them level up, preparing them for greater danger, bigger adventures, and mightier deeds.

Advancement, like everything else in Dungeon World, is both prescriptive and descriptive. Prescriptive means that when a player changes their character sheet, the character changes in the fiction. Descriptive means that when the character changes in the fiction, the player should change the character sheet to match. Descriptive changes only happen when the character has clearly gained access to an ability — discuss it as a group.

Level Up. As you play, you'll be exploring, fighting dangerous foes, and gathering treasure — each rewarded with XP at the end of the session. Acting according to your alignment, resolving bonds, and rolling a 6- all grant XP too. When you have downtime and enough XP (level+7), make the Level Up move.

Multiclass Moves. The multiclass moves let you gain a move from another class, of your level or lower. Starting-class moves that depend on each other (like the wizard's Cast a Spell, Spellbook, and Prepare Spells) count as one move for this purpose. If a move from another class refers to your level, count your levels from when you first gained a move from that class.

Requires and Replaces. Some higher-level moves depend on other moves. A move that Requires another can only be taken if you already have the required move — you then have both. A move that Replaces another can only be taken if you already have the replaced move — you lose the old move and just have the new one, which usually includes all its benefits plus more.

Beyond 10th Level. Once you have enough XP to go to 11th level, instead choose one: retire to safety (create a new character, and work with the GM to establish your place in the world); take on an apprentice (play a new character alongside your current one, who stops gaining XP); or change entirely to a new class (keep ability scores, race, HP, and whatever moves you and the GM agree are core, replacing all other class moves with your new class's starting moves).

BONDS

Bonds are what make you a party of adventurers, not just a random assortment of people. They're the feelings, thoughts, and shared history that tie you together. Each bond is a simple statement that relates your character to another player character. Your class gives you a few to start with; you'll replace your starting bonds and gain new ones through play.

Resolving Bonds. At the end of each session you may resolve one bond, if both you and the player of the character you share it with agree it no longer describes how you relate. When you resolve a bond, you get to mark XP.

Writing New Bonds. You write a new bond whenever you resolve an old one (with the same character or a different one). Choose something relevant to recent events, a thought or belief that ties the two characters together, and an action you intend to take about it.

ALIGNMENT

Alignment is your character's way of thinking and moral compass — an ethical ideal, religious stricture, or gut instinct. Every sentient creature in Dungeon World bears an alignment: Good, Lawful, Neutral, Chaotic, or Evil.

Lawful creatures aspire to impose order on the world, either for their own benefit or for that of others. Chaotic creatures embrace change and idealize the messy reality of the world, prizing freedom above all else. Good creatures seek to put others before themselves. Evil creatures put themselves first at the expense of others. A Neutral creature looks out for itself so long as that doesn't jeopardize someone else's well-being — most creatures are Neutral.

Changing Alignment. A character can adopt a new alignment any time their view of the world has fundamentally shifted, with a reason the player can explain to the group. A player may also switch alignment moves while keeping the same alignment, reflecting a smaller shift in priority.

Sample alignment-fulfilling actions, by alignment:

- ♦ **Lawful:** uphold the letter of the law over the spirit; fulfill a promise of import; bring someone to justice; choose honor over personal gain; return treasure to its rightful owner.

- ♦ **Good:** ignore danger to aid another; lead others into righteous battle; give up powers or riches for the greater good; reveal a dangerous lie; show mercy.

- ♦ **Neutral:** make an ally of someone powerful; defeat a personally important foe; learn a secret about an enemy; uncover a hidden truth.

- ♦ **Chaotic:** reveal corruption; break an unjust law to benefit another; defeat a tyrant; reveal hypocrisy.

- ♦ **Evil:** take advantage of someone's trust; cause suffering for its own sake; destroy something beautiful; upset the rightful order; harm an innocent.

HIRELINGS

Hirelings are those sorry souls that – for money, glory, or stranger needs – venture along with adventurers into the gloom and danger. To the characters, they're the help; to the players, a resource and a pool of replacement characters; to the GM, a human face for the characters to turn to.

A hireling is not a hero (unless they become a replacement character), so their exact HP, armor, and damage aren't particularly important. A hireling is defined by their **Skill** (or Skills), a **Cost**, and a **Loyalty** score. Skill is a special benefit related to a class ability, ranked 1-10; hirelings generally only work for adventurers of equal or higher level than their highest skill. No hireling works for free – if their cost isn't paid regularly (usually once a session) they're liable to quit or turn.

Order Hirelings. Hirelings do what you tell them to, so long as it isn't obviously dangerous, degrading, or stupid, and their cost is met. **When a hireling finds themselves in a dangerous, degrading, or just flat-out crazy situation due to your orders**, roll+loyalty. *On a 10+, they stand firm and carry out the order. *On a 7-9, they do it for now, but come back with serious demands later. Meet them or the hireling quits on the worst terms.

Making a Hireling. Start with a number based on where the hireling was found: village hirelings 2-5, town 4-6, keep 5-8, city 6-10. Distribute that number between loyalty, a main skill, and any secondary skills, then choose a cost. A hireling's stats, especially loyalty, may change during play: a kindness is +1 loyalty forward, disrespect -1 loyalty forward, an unpaid cost -1 loyalty ongoing until met, and a great deed or a beating may permanently shift loyalty.

Costs (sample motivations): The Thrill of Victory, Money, Uncovered Knowledge, Fame and Glory, Debauchery, Good Accomplished.

Skills:

Adept: Has apprenticed to an arcane expert but isn't powerful alone. *Arcane Assistance* — when an adept aids in casting a spell of lower level than their skill, the spell's range, duration, or potency is enhanced, though negative effects of the casting fall on the adept first.

Burglar: Skilled with devices and traps, less so in battle. *Experimental Trap Disarming* — when a burglar leads the way and a trap would be sprung, the burglar suffers the full effect but the party gets +skill against the trap and adds the burglar's skill to armor against it; if the party Makes Camp nearby, the burglar can disarm it by the time camp breaks.

Minstrel: Smooths things over and negotiates. *A Hero's Welcome* — entering a place of food, drink, or entertainment with a minstrel gets you treated as a friend, and subtracts the minstrel's skill from all prices in town.

Priest: Lower clergy, without granted spells but able to call on minor divine aid. *Ministry* — camping with a priest heals +skill HP. *First Aid* — a priest staunching your wounds heals 2×skill HP, but you take -1 forward.

Protector: Stands between employer and harm. *Sentry* — a protector defending you increases your armor against that attack by their skill, then their skill drops by 1 until healed or mended. *Intervene* — a protector helping you Defy Danger caps your result at 7-9 in exchange for +1.

Tracker: Follows a trail, without a hunter's broader experience. *Track* — given time while Making Camp, a tracker can follow a trail to the next major change in terrain, travel, or weather. *Guide* — a tracker automatically succeeds on any Perilous Journey shorter (in rations) than their skill.

Warrior: Handy with a weapon, if not a master. *Man-at-arms* — when you deal damage while a warrior aids you, add their skill to the damage; consequences of the attack fall on the warrior first.

THE ADVENTURER'S LIFE

Dungeons. A dungeon is any place filled with danger and opportunity — a dragon's cave, an enemy camp, a forgotten sewer, a sky castle, the very foundations of the world. Dungeons are living places: clearing the guards from the entryway doesn't mean they won't be replaced. Rations matter, since a delve isn't a day trip and an exit might be blocked. Watch for traps — a thief is invaluable, but discerning realities can help too, at greater risk.

Monsters. The beasts and worse that fill dungeons. Not all look monstrous — sometimes it's just a person in armor who wants you dead. Fighting monsters is an even bet: your life against theirs, so avoid an even fight when you can. Monsters generally fall into a few types: humanoids (orcs, goblins, and so on), beasts (animals, but not docile ones), constructs (crafted life), planar monsters (from beyond this world), and the undead (already dead, and hard to kill again).

Wilderness. The stuff between dungeons and civilization. Journeys by road are easy — just consume rations and arrive. A perilous journey needs a trailblazer, a scout, and a quartermaster, so you'll want at least three people traveling through dangerous territory.

Friends and Enemies. As an adventurer, people pay attention to you — not all of it welcome. Leverage and Parley get you what you want, but lasting connections come from doing right by people. Magic, on the other hand, may bend someone's will outright. Keep track of who has your back and who doesn't — the worst enemy is the one you don't know. Not all power is physical: station is its own kind of power apart from magic and might.

The World. You're a big deal, but the world goes on without you. If you don't deal with the goblins in the sewers, someone else might — or the goblins might take over the city. Your choices of who to kill, where to go, what bargains to make, all change the world you're in, in a cycle of change and growth for both you and the world you live in.