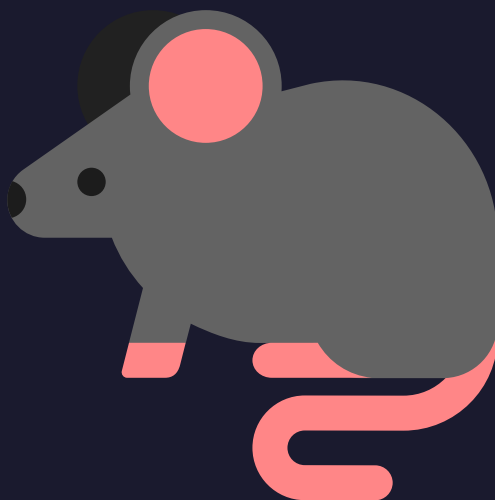




MAZE RATS

OFFICIAL RULEBOOK

A minimalist toolkit for old-school-style sandbox adventuring

2-5 PLAYERS	60-180 min MINUTES	12+ AGE
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MAZE RATS

An RPG and sandbox toolkit for old-school-style adventuring, by Ben Milton. Maze Rats contains a single, compact page of rules, a one-page character creation guide, and hundreds of procedural tables for generating spells, monsters, NPCs, treasure, cities, wildernesses, and dungeons on the fly. It plays with one Game Master (GM) and any number of players.

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CORE RULES

- ♦ [Core Rules](#) – Danger Rolls, Advantage, NPC Reactions, Initiative, Combat, NPC Morale, Healing, Encumbrance, Leveling Up
- ♦ [Character Creation](#) – the 12-step process, starting gear, and generating/casting spells
- ♦ [Character Sheet](#) – Blank character sheet (printable) with interactive generator

PROCEDURAL TABLES

Roll dice and consult for instant content: monsters, NPCs, treasure, cities, wilderness, dungeons, and more. Machine-readable JSON, organized to match the book's own sections:

- ♦ [magic.json](#) – spell formulas, mutations, insanities, omens
- ♦ [monsters-animals.json](#) – animals, monster features, traits, abilities, tactics
- ♦ [characters.json](#) – NPCs, names, personalities, goals, secrets
- ♦ [treasure-equipment.json](#) – items, potions, ingredients, treasure
- ♦ [city.json](#) – city themes, districts, buildings, factions, inns
- ♦ [wild.json](#) – wilderness regions, landmarks, hazards, plants
- ♦ [maze.json](#) – dungeon forms, layouts, rooms, traps

See the [tables index](#) for the full list and how to use them.



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CORE RULES

Maze Rats is a fantasy adventure game (also known as a roleplaying game, or RPG) of exploration, problem-solving, and survival. One player acts as the Game Master (GM) while the remaining players take on the role of Player Characters (PCs).

Although paper, pencils, and dice are involved, the core of the game is a conversation: the GM tells the players what is happening, the players tell the GM what their characters do in response, and the GM describes how their actions in turn affect the world.

The GM is the game's host and facilitator. Their primary duties include: playing the roles of all of the Non-Player Characters (NPCs), creating and running the fictional world, establishing concrete situations for the players to interact with, adapting to the unpredictable choices of the players, making rulings on how and when to apply rules in a particular situation, and finally inventing, altering, or entirely removing game rules if it improves the game.

The players' jobs are simpler: roleplay the personalities and choices of their PCs, interact with the situations presented by the GM, and work together to stay alive and hopefully prosper. Characters grow in strength the longer they survive, but Maze Rats presumes a world full of peril, so only the cleverest of players will see their PC live long enough to retire from the adventuring life and enjoy their ill-gotten gains.

⚠ DANGER ROLLS

Whenever possible, a PC's actions should be resolved by its player simply describing what the character does. However, if the action is risky and difficult to resolve through description, the GM may call for a Danger Roll. The player rolls 2d (two six-sided dice) and adds the proper ability bonus. If the total is 10 or higher, the PC avoids the danger. If not, the GM describes how things go wrong. Danger rolls usually fail, so players should do everything they can to make risky situations less so.

- ♦ Add the Strength bonus (STR) when using raw power, stamina, or physical resilience.
- ♦ Add the Dexterity bonus (DEX) when using speed, agility, or precision.
- ♦ Add the Will bonus (WIL) when using force of personality, perception, or willpower.

If one character takes an action against another, the GM may decide to call for an Opposed Danger Roll. In this case, both characters make a danger roll, with each trying to beat the other's total instead of trying to roll a 10+. Defenders win ties.

🎲 ADVANTAGE

If the risk of an action is reduced due to the PC's paths, preparation, or situational factors, the GM may grant Advantage to the roll. In this case, the player rolls 3d instead of 2d and uses the two highest dice. Attack rolls may also have advantage if the situation calls for it. Only one advantage die may be added to a roll. If several advantages apply to the PC's action, the action is usually no longer risky.

NPC REACTIONS

If the PCs come across a monster or NPC whose disposition is unknown, roll 1d on the table below.

ROLL	REACTION
1	Hostile
2-3	Wary
4-5	Friendly
6	Helpful

Hostile NPCs will attempt to hinder, harass, or attack the PCs. Wary NPCs are unhelpful unless given significant motivation. Friendly NPCs will help as long as it doesn't inconvenience them. Helpful NPCs will help even when it's inconvenient.

INITIATIVE

Both sides roll a die when combat breaks out, rerolling any ties. The side with the higher roll acts first during the first combat round, followed by the other side. After each round, reroll initiative. This may result in a side taking two consecutive turns.

On a side's turn, each of its characters, in any order, may move about 30 feet and take one action. Types of actions include: attacking a target within range, casting a spell, drinking a potion, making a second move, etc.

If a group ambushes another group or NPC, it automatically gains initiative, as well as advantage on all attack rolls during the first round. The leader of the ambushed group may be permitted a WIL danger roll to avoid surprise.

COMBAT

Characters have a base armor rating of 6. Light armor and shields provide +1 armor each, while heavy armor provides +2 armor. Shields use one hand and so cannot be used with two-handed weapons. Characters in heavy armor cannot gain advantage on DEX danger rolls or surprise attack rolls.

When one character attacks another, the attacker makes an Attack Roll by rolling 2d and adding their Attack Bonus (AB). Attacking with a ranged weapon is impossible while in melee combat.

Compare the attacker's attack total to the defender's armor. If the attacker's total exceeds the defender's armor, the attack hits and deals damage to the defender equal to the difference between the two scores. Heavy weapons add 1 to this damage (but not the initial attack roll), while unarmed attacks subtract 1 damage (but may not reduce damage to 0). If the attacker rolled double sixes, the roll is a Critical Hit and the total damage is doubled, or some other effect is applied at the GM's discretion. Subtract the damage from the defender's Health.

If the defender has a shield, they may choose to shatter it when they are hit by an attack to ignore all damage from that attack.

If a character ever has zero or less health, they are immediately slain. When a PC is slain, its player creates a new first level PC, or takes over a first level NPC hireling. The GM then has them rejoin the group as soon as possible.

NPC MORALE

When an NPC or hireling faces more danger than they were expecting, the GM may call for a WIL danger roll to see if they rout or beg for mercy.

Typical situations for making a morale check include when an NPC loses half of their force (when in a group), loses half of their health (when alone), loses their leader, or is attacked by magic.

Most NPCs should not get into fights that they cannot win, and should tactically retreat or sue for peace if it makes sense, even without a morale roll.

HEALING

PCs recover 1 point of lost health when the PC eats a meal and then gets a full night of rest. 24 hours of rest in a safe location restores all health. A dose of medicine restores 1 point of health, once per day.

ENCUMBRANCE

All of a PC's items must have a recorded location: worn, in the backpack, on the belt, or carried in the hands. Belts carry up to two items, and backpacks can carry as much as a backpack could reasonably fit. Belt items can be grabbed in combat at any time, but backpack items take 1d rounds to find.

LEVELING UP

All PCs begin at level 1, and gain levels over the course of the campaign. At the end of each session, the GM awards 1–3 Experience Points (XP) to all PCs based on how much the party achieved.

- ♦ Showed up to the game: 1 XP.
- ♦ Overcame a difficult challenge: 2 XP.
- ♦ Overcame an impressive challenge beyond their expected ability: 3 XP.

When a PC has enough XP, they gain a level. After reaching level 7, the PC may retire and become an NPC; the player then makes a new level 1 PC.

LEVEL	XP	FEATURES
2	2	+2 max health, +1 to an ability bonus
3	6	+2 max health. Pick one: attack bonus +1, gain a new path, or gain a spell slot
4	12	+2 max health, +1 to an ability bonus
5	20	+2 max health. Pick one: attack bonus +1, gain a new path, or gain a spell slot
6	30	+2 max health, +1 to an ability bonus
7	42	+2 max health. Pick one: attack bonus +1, gain a new path, or gain a spell slot

MONSTER & NPC STATS

Use these categories as a shorthand for building monster and NPC stat blocks quickly.

Health. Weak: 1d. Typical: 2d. Tough: 3d. Hulking: 4d. Colossal: 6d.

Armor. Unarmored: 6 armor. Light protection: 7 armor. Moderate protection: 8 armor. Heavy protection: 9 armor. Nigh impervious: 10 armor. Note that armor can also be used to represent a monster's resistance to mundane weapons, or other factors that would make it difficult to harm.

Attack Bonus. Untrained: +0 AB. Trained: +1 AB. Dangerous: +2 AB. Masterful: +3 AB. Lethal: +4 AB.

STR Bonus. Weak: +0 STR. Average: +1 STR. Strong: +2 STR. Powerful: +3 STR. Monstrous: +4 STR.

DEX Bonus. Slow: +0 DEX. Average: +1 DEX. Nimble: +2 DEX. Swift: +3 DEX. Blurred: +4 DEX.

WIL Bonus. Dimwitted: +0 WIL. Average: +1 WIL. Clever: +2 WIL. Brilliant: +3 WIL. Genius: +4 WIL.

Magic. While some monsters may have spells and spell slots like a human, most are innately magical. These monsters do not follow the normal spellcasting rules, and may have abilities that are always active or that can simply be used at will.

GOLD PRICES

Use the list of gold prices below as a guideline. Players may have to haggle for actual prices.

- ♦ **Light weapons:** 1 hand (20g).
- ♦ **Heavy weapons:** +1 damage, 2 hands (40g).
- ♦ **Ranged weapons:** 2 hands (20–40g).
- ♦ **Shield:** One handed, +1 armor (10g).
- ♦ **Light Armor:** +1 armor (100g).
- ♦ **Heavy Armor:** +2 armor, no advantage on DEX danger rolls or surprise attack rolls (400g).
- ♦ **Common Items:** Rope, candles, etc. (1–5g).
- ♦ **Specialized Items:** Bear trap, key, etc. (5–20g).
- ♦ **Luxury Items:** Book, mirror, potion, etc. (20–100g).
- ♦ **Animals:** Mule (20g), Horse (100g), Dog (5g), Bloodhound (100g), Chicken (5g), Trained falcon (1,000g).
- ♦ **Transport:** Cart (30g), Wagon (100g), Coach (250g), Rowboat (50g), Fishing boat (500g), Caravel (5,000g), Warship (10,000g).
- ♦ **Property:** Small House (1,000g), Tavern (2,000g), Guildhall (5,000g), Manor (10,000g), Fortified Outpost (25,000g), Estate (50,000g), Castle (200,000g).
- ♦ **Hirelings** (per day): Servant (1–5g), Torchbearer (5–10g), Guide (10–20g), Sellsword (20–50g), Specialist (50–100g), Magician (100–200g).

CHARACTER CREATION

Create your character at the beginning of a new campaign along with the other players. If your character dies during the game, you should make a new one right away. The random tables can be used to flesh out your character if you want a bit more detail. Drawing a portrait of your character is highly encouraged, as is adopting a mannerism or two when speaking in your character's voice.

RANDOM TABLES

Tables with 36 entries are organized into 6 groups of 6. To randomly pick an item, roll 2d separately: the first die points to a group, the second points to an item within that group. For example, rolling "4, 2" on a 36-entry table selects group 4, item 2. Bolded items refer you to another random table where you should roll again.

1. ROLL OR CHOOSE ABILITIES

Your PC has 3 abilities: Strength, Dexterity, and Will. Roll 1d to find their starting values, or simply choose a row (with GM permission). You may raise one of your PC's abilities by one point at levels 2, 4, and 6. A PC's abilities may never be raised higher than +4.

ROLL	STRENGTH	DEXTERITY	WILL
1	+2	+1	+0
2	+2	+0	+1
3	+1	+2	+0
4	+0	+2	+1
5	+1	+0	+2
6	+0	+1	+2

If you want your abilities to be more randomized (and possibly unbalanced), the GM may also allow you to roll 1d for each ability separately:

ROLL	ABILITY SCORE
1-2	+0
3-5	+1
6	+2

2. RECORD MAXIMUM HEALTH

Your PC begins with 4 maximum health and 4 current health. PCs add 2 to their maximum health (but not current health) each time they gain a level.

3. CHOOSE STARTING FEATURE

Your PC begins with one of the following features:

- ♦ **Attack bonus** — add 1 to all attack rolls.
- ♦ **A single spell slot** — cast one spell per day, generated from the Magic tables.

A single path, from the four options below (gain advantage on related danger rolls):

- ♦ Briarborn: tracking, foraging, survival.
- ♦ Fingersmith: tinkering, picking locks or pockets.
- ♦ Roofrunner: climbing, leaping, balancing.
- ♦ Shadowjack: moving silently, hiding in shadows.

4. ROLL OR CHOOSE SIX ITEMS

Record the location of all items, armor, and weapons: hands, worn, belt, or backpack. Belts carry up to two items, and backpacks can carry as much as a backpack could reasonably fit.

Animal scent, bear trap, bedroll, caltrops, chain (10 ft.), chalk, iron tongs, lantern and oil, large sack, lockpicks (3), manacles, medicine (3), chisel, crowbar, fishing net, glass marbles, glue, grappling hook, metal file, rations (3), rope (50 ft.), steel wire, shovel, steel mirror, grease, hacksaw, hammer, hand drill, horn, iron spikes, ten foot pole, tinderbox, torch, vial of acid, vial of poison, waterskin.

5. CHOOSE COMBAT GEAR

PCs start with light armor (+1 armor), a shield (+1 armor, 1 hand), and two weapons:

- ♦ **Light weapons** (1 hand): axes, daggers, maces, short swords, flails, one-handed spears, etc.
- ♦ **Heavy weapons** (+1 damage, 2 hands): spears, halberds, long swords, warhammers, etc.
- ♦ **Ranged weapons** (2 hands): bows, crossbows, slings, etc.

Characters have a base armor rating of 6. Wearing light armor increases it to 7, and holding a shield in one hand increases it to 8.

6. ROLL OR CREATE APPEARANCE

See appearances in [characters.json](#).

7. ROLL OR CREATE PHYSICAL DETAIL

See physical-details in [characters.json](#).

8. ROLL OR CREATE BACKGROUND

A PC's background does not have any particular mechanical effects. The GM may take it into account, however, when deciding what the PC knows or who their contacts are. Roll on the [underworld-npcs](#), [civilized-npcs](#), or [wilderness-npcs](#) tables in [characters.json](#).

9. ROLL OR CREATE CLOTHING

See [clothing](#) in [characters.json](#).

10. ROLL OR CREATE PERSONALITY

See [personalities](#) in [characters.json](#).

11. ROLL OR CREATE MANNERISM

See [mannerisms](#) in [characters.json](#).

12. RECORD NAME, LEVEL, AND XP

Keep your name short and memorable. You begin at level 1 and with zero XP.

GENERATING AND CASTING SPELLS

GENERATING SPELLS

If a PC has spell slots, its player must generate spells to fill them. This is done during character creation and every morning in-game after the PC gets a full night of rest. Spells in spell slots cannot be removed except by casting them.

To generate a spell, the player first rolls 2d on the spell formula table ([spells](#) in [magic.json](#)) to find which two tables to combine. One die indicates the row, the other the column. Once the player has found the spell formula, they roll on the two indicated magic tables (Physical/Ethereal Effects, Elements, and Forms) to create the spell's name. The GM then tells the player the spell's general effects, based on its name.

Offensive spells typically allow their targets a danger roll to resist or avoid the effects. If the spell includes damage, the GM can either set a flat damage rating, or rate the damage as a number of dice from 1 to 6.

Players may also suggest uses for the spell outside of the GM's description. If the suggested effect matches the spell's name and the situation very closely, the GM should usually allow it.

The GM may also opt to roll random spells from spell lists written for other old-school games.

CASTING A SPELL

Casting a spell takes one action if cast during combat. The GM is the final arbiter of how the spell manifests and how it affects the current situation. After being cast, the spell is erased from the caster's spell slot and cannot be cast again.

CHARACTER SHEET

A blank character sheet for recording your Maze Rats character's abilities, attack bonus, HP, and inventory. Print this sheet or use the [interactive character generator](#) to create a new character with randomised appearance, personality, and starting gear.

Adventurer

Name

Appearance

Abilities

Strength

+0 to +4

Dexterity

+0 to +4

Will

+0 to +4

Health

Starting Feature

☐ Attack Bonus (+1 to attacks)

☐ Spell Slot (1 spell/day)

☐ Path: Briarborn (tracking, foraging, survival)

☐ Path: Fingersmith (tinkering, picking locks/pockets)

☐ Path: Roofrunner (climbing, leaping, balancing)

☐ Path: Shadowjack (stealth, hiding in shadows)

Equipment

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Backpack

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Physical Details

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Maze Rats Character Sheet

<https://engine-moddable.games/play/?game=maze-rats&variant=character-sheet>