

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).