

roguish

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Roguish is a small game about dark dungeons

Dependencies

You will need:

- a stack of index cards (gridded ones would be appropriate)
- pens or pencils
- distinctive counters to be the heroes and the monsters

Seeding the RNG

Discuss what tone you want your game to have. A game where the rooms, monsters, and treasures are based firmly on fantasy roleplaying and roguelikes is very different from a game that draws from gaming or pop-cultural tropes more widely.

Each player should make some dungeon rooms, about seven, by drawing or doodling or diagramming on index cards. All of them should have at least one door, probably a couple doors. Most of them should have a monster (draw a ghost or some scary eyes). Some of them should have a treasure chest (draw a chest or a dollar sign). Each player should draw exactly one room with stairs leading down. Shuffle all the rooms into a pile and place it face-down.

Rooms can be featureless chambers or hallways, or they can have some more interesting features. Special rooms could include weapon shops, shrines, throne rooms, chasms with rickety bridges over them, or crypts.

Each player should make some monsters, about four or five, marked on the back with an "M". Every monster needs a name and a doodle. Most monsters should be puny (bat, slime, wolf, snake). Some monsters should be formidable (ogre shaman, troll, naga, ghou). A couple should be legendary (the Red Dragon, Elrax the Grim, the Eldest Minotaur). Some monsters could have a specific special attack (acid breath, poison, fire arrows). Shuffle the monsters into a face-down pile.

Other monsters: giant ant, werewolf, tiger, floating eye, hobbit, mind flayer, dwarf lord, giant rat, earth elemental, frost giant, clay golem, cockatrice, stegohydra, giant squid, mountainous goat.

Each player should make some treasures, maybe four or five, marked on the back with a "T". Every treasure needs a name and a doodle. Some treasures should be mundane (longsword, half-helm, wavy dagger), some should be magical (flaming sword, wand of teleportation, dagger of returning), some should be cursed (robe of visibility, sandals of clumsiness), and a couple should be traps (darts, poison gas, hands-stuck-magically-to-the-chest). Someone should make a mimic (which is of course a treasure chest that turns out to be a monster). Shuffle the treasures together, place the pile face-down.

Other treasures: wand of magic missile or invisibility or cold, mace, katana, poleaxe, falchion, bag of gold, Elven baguette, holy symbol, orb of seeing, rod of lightning.

If you have rooms, monsters, or treasures you saved from the last time you played Roguish that you want to include, shuffle them into the appropriate piles at this time.

Character Select

Why do you want to enter the dungeon?

...for glory... You are a knight. You level up when you meet a legendary monster. You start with a leather cap and a short sword.

...for riches... You are a rogue. You level up when you uncover a great treasure. You start with a thief's tools and a dagger.

...for power... You are a wizard. You level up when you awaken powerful magic. You start with a pointy hat and a wand of zapping.

Choose one as the name of your character:

- your name
- the name of your computer
- one of your first internet handles

Doodle your character on an index card. Write "level 1" at the bottom. Pick a counter to be your guy in the dungeon.

Entering the Dungeon

Draw one more room to be the entrance. It should have stairs leading up and a door on each of the four sides of the card. If you ever go up a set of stairs, you flee the dungeon.

On your turn, you can do stuff. Stop when the next player wants their turn.

When you open a door and walk into a new room, flip over the top room card and place it near the door you walked through. If there's a monster icon, flip over the top monster card and see what you have to deal with. Pick a counter for the monster and place it in the room with you. If there are stairs leading down on the new room, that's the last room on this level of the dungeon; all unexplored doors are now dead ends.

When you hit a monster, it hits back. Puny monsters go down in one or two hits, formidable ones take several, legendary monsters will probably kill you if you aren't clever. Say how you use your equipment and skills to hit the monster. When

you get hit, scribble over part of your character card. When your card is totally obscured, you're dead. Once you've exchanged blows with a monster, it's definitely the next player's turn.

When you loot a treasure chest, first there had better not be any monsters left in the room or they'll probably harass you while you try. Then flip over the top card of the treasure pile and claim the spoils of battle. If the treasure is cursed or otherwise undesirable, you are compelled to put it on and suffer its effects. You'll have to find some way of taking it off.

When you level up, write your new level on your character card. Create a new piece of equipment appropriate to your character and level and award it to yourself.

When your party has uncovered the stairs and all the monsters on the current level of the dungeon have been defeated, you can descend to the next level. Sweep all the rooms from this level except for the entrance away and put them in a discard pile. Put everybody's token on the entrance and continue exploring the next level of the dungeon.

When you run out of monsters or treasures, make some more or shuffle some back into the draw pile. When you run out of rooms, make some more, shuffle some back into the draw pile, or decide that you're on the last level of the dungeon and figure out what you can do to fulfill your ultimate goal.

When you do something completely and transcendently awesome on the last level of the dungeon (when there are no more rooms in the pile), ascend to demigodhood.

When you die, escape the dungeon, or ascend to demigod-hood, record some of your achievements on the back of your card. Give yourself a score. Take note of how you expired and what level you were. Tape the card to the wall or stick it on the fridge. Do one of these:

- make a new level one character and stick yourself at the entrance
- play yourself as a ghost, haunt the other players
- take more responsibility for what the monsters do, draw some more monsters