

Solo Dungeon Bash

By Paul Le Long

Ok, if you're a dyed in the wool historical wargamer who doesn't like roleplaying games (RPGs) then you might as well stop reading now! Still with me? Right – I love RPGs, I mean I *really* love them. I started on choose a paragraph type game books and then graduated to proper RPGs like Dungeons and Dragons. But I'm a soloist at heart and I don't like socialising that much so I've long been attracted to solo RPGs but have never really (until recently) understood how such an intrinsically social activity could be played solo.

Nevertheless I drew up the following notes for a light-hearted, simple, randomly generated dungeon bash type campaign based on old boardgames like Advanced Heroquest, Heroquest, DungeonQuest and a few others all of which have the words 'dragon', 'dungeon' or 'quest' in the title. I use commercially produced tiles for the dungeon layout and its contents, but you could just sketch it out on graph paper if you want. The dice I use are from Heroquest (a boardgame from the 1980s) which have a skull on three sides and a shield on the other 3 sides – again, adapt as you see fit.

When entering a dungeon, place the adventurers at the bottom of a stairs tile and roll on the passage features table and passage end table.

Passages

Passage Features Table

2D12	Feature	2D12	Feature
2-4	Wandering Monsters	17-21	2 Doors
5-10	Nothing	22-24	Wandering Monsters
11-16	1 Door		

Doors are placed randomly – no more than one per side of a passage section.

Passage End Table

2D12	Passage End	2D12	Passage End
2-5	T-Junction	16-19	Left Turn
4-8	Dead End	20-24	Stairs
9-13	Right Turn		
14-15	T-Junction		

Doors

Doors opened from a passage always lead to a room.

Doors opened from a room – roll 1 die – Skull: Opens onto a passage; Shield: Opens onto a room.

Rooms

Room Type Table

2D12	Room Type	Room Size
2-12	Normal	Small

13-16	Hazard	Small
17-20	Lair	Large
21-24	Quest	Large

Room Doors

To see how many doors there are in a room roll on the room doors table. Doors are placed on random walls by die roll.

Room Doors Table

D12	Number of Doors
1-4	None
5-8	1 Door
9-12	2 Doors

Furniture Table

2D12	Items of Furniture
1-6	1 Item
7-10	2 Items
11-12	3 Items
13-24	No furniture

Furniture Type Table

2D12	Furniture	2D12	Furniture
1-4	Table	19	Rack
5-7	Chairs	20	Alchemist's Table
8-12	Cupboard	21	Chest
13-14	Weapons Rack	22	Coffin
15-17	Bookcase	23	Wizard's Table
18	Fireplace	24	Statue

Types of Room

Normal: A small, empty room of little interest – simply determine its exits and contents.

Lair: This should be determined before the game – what constitutes a lair in this dungeon? It could just be a room with lots of normal monsters – they have to sleep somewhere – so it could just be a guardroom. Any special monsters will be found in a lair.

Quest: Determine before the game – this should be the object of the quest (or one of them if there are multiple objectives).

Hazard: Roll on the following table.

Hazard Room Table

D12	Hazard	D12	Hazard
1	Wandering Monster	7	Fungus
2	NPC	8	Grate
3	Chasm	9	Pool
4	Statue	10	Magic Circle
5	Rats or Bats	11	Trapdoor
6	Mould	12	Throne

I won't go into detail about these hazards – you'll replace them with your own contents anyway and in any case you can work out effects to suit your scenario.

Searching

Any passage or room can be searched once. In my game I've stolen treasure and equipment cards from various old boardgames and I pick them at random when searching. If you have access to similar items you can use them, otherwise you will need to make up some sort of table. This is easily done, especially if you have an old D&D rule book as they used to print lots of treasure tables in them. Whatever you choose, you should include wandering monsters, traps and secret doors along with all the equipment and treasure items.

Combat

When the party comes across monsters, decide how many there are, what they are, whether they are surprised. Roll 1D6 for the party and monsters – on a 1 or 2 that group is surprised. If one group is surprised and the other is not, the latter can take a free action (each member) before the surprised party can react. If the party is Surprised, it must Wait and See what the monsters do.

Both groups must decide what to do - either to Attack, Flee or Wait and See. For the adventurers, you decide. For the monsters I simply roll a die – on a Skull they attack, on a black shield (there are two types of shield on Heroquest dice) they flee and on a white shield they wait and see. It's easy to use a D6 instead if you don't have the special skulls/shields dice, but I like the flavour you get with the latter.

Anyway, when trying to stab someone, a figure rolls a number of dice based on ability when attacking or defending. When attacking, Skulls are hits, Shields are misses. The defending figure rolls dice to defend – Skulls are wasted, Shields (any type) deflect hits. So if someone hits you with 2 Skulls, you need to roll 2 Shields in defence to deflect the blow. Armour is not really taken into account here – it is assumed that each figure is armoured in an appropriate fashion for its type and this is reflected in its defence score. If a figure is deemed to be well or poorly armoured then apply modifiers as you see fit.

Monster Table

Monster	No. Appearing	# Attack Dice	# Defend Dice	# Wounds
Goblin	2D6	2	2	2
Orc	2D4	3	3	3
Hobgoblin	1D6	3	3	3
Skaven	2D6	2	2	2
Firmir	1D3	4	4	4
Gnoll	1D3	4	4	4
Troll	1	5	5	5
Ogre	1	6	6	5
Bugbear	1	5	5	5
Beastman	1D6	4	3	4
Chaos Warrior	1D3	4	5	3
Skeleton	2D6	2	2	4
Zombie	2D6	1	1	4
Wraith	1	4	4	4
Mummy	1	4	3	4
Gargoyle	1	5	5	6
Normal Man	2D6	1	1	1
Militia Man	2D6	2	2	2

Man at Arms	2D4	3	3	3
Sergeant	1D4	4	4	4
Knight	1D3	5	5	5
Hero	1	6	6	6
Elf	1D6	5	5	3
Dwarf	1D6	4	5	4

Random Adventuring Party

Roll 2D3 to determine the number in the party. Then for each party member roll on the table below to see what they are.

1-5 Man at Arms

6-9 Sergeant

10-11 Knight

12 Elf

13 Dwarf

14 Thief (use Militia stats)

15 Wizard (use Militia stats)

16 Ranger (use Sergeant stats)

17 Paladin (use Sergeant stats)

18 Cleric (use Militia stats)

19-20 Hero

If a party consists of fewer than six members, make it up to six with Henchmen (Men at Arms). If there are more than three Henchmen/MAA in a party, one will be a Sergeant. Henchmen will not proceed deeper into a dungeon once the adventurers are out of the game. Wounded characters can be escorted out of the dungeon by henchmen or other characters – the escort will not return.

Wizard: can cast spells.

Cleric: Can cure wounds – 1D3 wounds restored on a successful skill check* (see below). Clerics can ‘turn’ undead – roll 3 dice at the beginning of an encounter; each undead figure rolls defence dice - if they are beaten they will crumble, ‘die’, run, dissolve etc. as appropriate. Any figure that successfully defends is unaffected for the duration of the encounter.

Paladin: Can cure wounds – 1 wound restored on a successful skill check*.

Dwarf: Night vision; Detects traps on a successful skill check*; resistant to poison, magic.

Elf: Night vision. 50% chance of having spells.

Thief: Can open any door; re-roll secret door rolls; detect traps as Dwarf

Ranger: Animal kinship; Camouflage on a successful skill check*.

Now, I have my own set of RPG rules which include things like skills and magic, or you can use the very simple magic rules from Heroquest if you have it. I don’t want to get bogged down here on stuff like this and anyway I’m sure you have your own ideas. For skill checks I would use a simple system like the following: roll 6D6 and you succeed on a roll of 36+ (I know, I know, wait for it...); if the task is dead easy add 29 to the score, +18 for an average task, +10 for difficult and so on all the way down to +0 for a task that’s almost impossible. Just use your judgement and keep it fast and flowing – it can be quick and dirty, we’re having a dungeon bash here, not designing manned space flight – keep it moving. You can do the same for magic if you want – we’re making it all up anyway right?

So anyway, we have a party of adventurers, now we need a dungeon.

Random Dungeons

Roll 1D10:

- 1: Abandoned Dwarf Mine
- 2: Undead Mine
- 3: Necropolis
- 4: Sea Caves
- 5: Goblin Dungeon
- 6: Trolls and Gnolls
- 7: Castle Dungeon
- 8: Sewers
- 9: Wizard's Lair
- 10: Dragon's Lair

Abandoned Dwarf Mine

Hazards: Chasm (roll to see if there is a bridge), Fungus, Statue, Rats and Bats.

Level 1

Terrain: Tunnels

Wandering Monster: Goblin

Lair: Goblins + Orc

Quest: Treasure Room – Draw 1D3 treasure cards (or randomly roll on whatever table you have set up for random treasure).

Level 2

Terrain: Rooms

Wandering Monster: Skaven (rat men)

Lair: Skaven + Troll

Quest: Treasure Room – Draw 1D3 treasure cards

Level 3

Terrain: Rooms

Wandering Monster: Skaven

Lair: Skaven + Ogre

Quest: Treasure Room – Draw 1D3 treasure cards + 1D3 equipment cards + 50% chance of 1 magic item.





Undead Mine

Hazards: Chasm (roll to see if there is a bridge), Mushrooms, Statue, Rats &

Level 1

Terrain: Tunnels

Wandering Monster:

Zombie

Lair: Mummy

Quest: Treasure Room

– Draw 1D3 treasure cards

Level 2

Terrain: Rooms

Wandering Monster:

Skeleton

Lair: Wraith

Quest: Treasure Room

– Draw 1D3 treasure cards

Level 3

Terrain: Rooms

Wandering Monster: Skeletons

Lair: Wraith + zombies

Quest: Treasure Room – Draw 1D3 treasure cards + 1D3 equipment cards + 50% chance of 1 magic item.

Necropolis

Hazards: Normal.

Level 1

Terrain: Rooms

Wandering Monster: Zombie

Lair: Wraith

Quest: Crypt

Level 2

Terrain: Rooms

Wandering Monster: Skeleton

Lair: Wraith

Quest: Crypt

Level 3

Terrain: Rooms

Wandering Monster: Skeletons

Lair: Mummy + zombies

Quest: Necromancer (Militia stats; spell) + skeletons. Treasure Room – Draw 1D3 treasure cards + 1D3 equipment cards + 50% chance of 1 magic item.

Sea Caves

Hazards: Mould, Fungus, Pool. Rooms and corridors may be flooded (reduce movement) or even submerged

Level 1

Terrain: Tunnels

Wandering Monster: Goblin

Lair: Firmirs (like big orcs really)

Quest: Draw 1D3 treasure cards

Level 2

Terrain: Tunnels

Wandering Monster: Orc

Lair: Firmirs

Quest: Draw 1D3 treasure cards

Level 3

Terrain: Tunnels

Wandering Monster: Firmirs

Lair: Giant Octopus Man (don't ask me!) + Firmirs

Quest: Flooded cave (chest depth) with 1D6 treasure chests (draw 1D6 treasure cards)

Goblin Dungeon

Hazards: Normal

Level 1

Terrain: Rooms

Wandering Monster: Goblin

Lair: Orc + Goblins

Quest: Draw 1D3 treasure cards

Level 2

Terrain: Rooms

Wandering Monster: Orc

Lair: Bugbear + Goblins

Quest: Draw 1D3 treasure cards

Level 3

Terrain: Rooms

Wandering Monster: Gnolls

Lair: Ogre + goblins

Quest: Treasure Room – Draw 1D3 treasure cards + 1D3 equipment cards

Trolls and Gnolls

Hazards: Chasm

Level 1

Terrain: Tunnels

Wandering Monster: Gnolls

Lair: Troll

Quest: Draw 1D3 treasure cards

Level 2

Terrain: Tunnels

Wandering Monster: Gnolls

Lair: Troll

Quest: Draw 1D3 treasure cards

Level 3

Terrain: Tunnels

Wandering Monster: Gnoll

Lair: Troll + gnoll

Quest: Gargoyle. Treasure Room – Draw 1D3 treasure cards + 1D3 equipment cards

Castle Dungeon

Hazards: Normal

Level 1

Terrain: Rooms

Wandering Monster: Men at Arms

Lair: Sergeant + men at arms

Quest: Draw 1D3 treasure cards

Level 2

Terrain: Rooms

Wandering Monster: Sergeants

Lair: Sergeant + men at arms

Quest: Draw 1D3 treasure cards

Level 3

Terrain: Rooms

Wandering Monster: Chaos Warriors

Lair: Chaos Warriors + men at arms

Quest: Treasure Room – Draw 1D3 treasure cards + 1D3 equipment cards + 50% chance of 1 magic item card

Sewers

Hazards: Mould, Fungus, Pool. Rooms & corridors may be flooded (reduce movement) or even submerged

Level 1

Terrain: Tunnels – corridors + caverns

Wandering Monster: Skaven

Lair: Troll + skaven

Quest: Draw 1D3 treasure cards

Level 2

Terrain: Tunnels – corridors + caverns

Wandering Monster: Skaven

Lair: Slime beast – 5 dice for attack & defend and can sustain 6 wounds; move 1; spit poison (50% chance per wound of victim being poisoned).

Quest: Draw 1D3 treasure cards

Level 3

Terrain: Tunnels – corridors + caverns

Wandering Monster: Skaven

Lair: Slime beast – 5 dice for attack & defend and can sustain 6 wounds; move 1; spit poison (50% chance per wound of victim being poisoned).

Quest: Skaven + Skaven shaman (spells). Draw 1D3 treasure cards

Wizard's Lair

Hazards: Pool, Magic Circle, Statue

Level 1

Terrain: Rooms

Wandering Monster: Men at Arms

Lair: Chaos Warrior + men at arms

Quest: Draw 1D3 treasure cards

Level 2

Terrain: Rooms

Wandering Monster: Sergeants

Lair: Chaos Warrior + men at arms

Quest: Draw 1D3 treasure cards

Level 3

Terrain: Rooms

Wandering Monster: Chaos Warriors

Lair: Chaos Warrior + men at arms

Quest: Throne room. Chaos Warriors + Wizard (use Militia stats + spells. Draw 1D3 treasure cards + 1D3 equipment cards + 50% chance of 1 magic item.



Dragon's Lair

Hazards: Normal

Level 1

Terrain: Rooms

Wandering Monster: Goblin

Lair: Orc + Goblins

Quest: Draw 1D3 treasure cards

Level 2

Terrain: Rooms

Wandering Monster: Orc

Lair: Bugbear + Goblins

Quest: Draw 1D3 treasure cards

Level 3

Terrain: Rooms

Wandering Monster: Orc
Lair: Ogre + goblins
Quest: Tunnel going down

Level 4

Terrain: Tunnels

Wandering Monster: Gnoll

Lair: none

Quest: Dragon (Attack 8, Defend 8, Wounds 8; breathe fire 1 in every 3 turns – Attack 10). Draw 1D6 treasure cards + 1D6 equipment cards + 1 magic item.

Conclusion

There are necessarily a lot of gaps in these rules – mostly because you will not have access to the same set of old boardgames that I've pillaged for various bits and pieces. You may have different bits and pieces or you may have to make stuff up for yourself – but that's fine because it should reflect your tastes – it's your game. And it should be freeform – fantasy shouldn't be about hard and fast rules, it should be fun, fast, atmospheric and all of that is quite subjective so I make no apology for leaving you to fill in the gaps. Nevertheless, give it a try even if you do have to adapt things to make it work for you – I think it will be worth it; it's a simple system that's easy to set up and play, isn't demanding and is something easy-going that you can play after a hard day at work when your brain isn't fit for anything else.

A word of warning though – I find that you do need some characterisation to bring your randomly generated characters to life – I'll talk about that in another article. In the meantime, happy dungeoneering!