

DELVER



Second Edition

Updated by
Natalie the Knife

Design and Layout by Natalie the Knife (she/her)

@rpgnatalie on Twitter

rpgnatalie.itch.io

Art by Sasha Reneau (they/them)

@sasha_reneau on Twitter

sashareneau.com

Updated from Delver by Happy Rebel Tapestries

Happy rebel tapestries is:

Natalie the Knife (she/her)

@rpgnatalie on Twitter

rpgnatalie.itch.io

Nora Blake (she/her & zi/zin)

@NeitherNora on Twitter

neithernora.itch.io

DELVER 2E

a narrative dungeon crawl RPG
from Natalie the Knife

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The world is starting to forget...

It forgets history, kings in halls of gold with conquering hands stained red. It forgets faith, the high walls of righteous keeps and thatched roofs of humble chapels. It forgets knowledge, musty libraries and clockwork machines. It forgets life, skin tinged with blushes and eyes wet with tears.

A great fog of forgetting creeps in, stealing things you used to know. Always in your peripheral, it wafts and waits to consume the things you love.

We hold it back with torches of memory's ire. One last breath of fight before the dusk. One last scrambled meaning before the dark, oppressing shadow of oblivion.

But the sun rises on the wrong horizon. The edges of the map fade like ink on parchment. The wind dies, the creatures of the woods fall silent.

Go, traveler. Find meaning where you can, before the sleep of forgetfulness whisks you away into the eternal night...

Delver is a game of dungeon crawling. You will need: 2 – 5 players, some six-sided dice, and something to write with (paper and pencil, an online writing tool - whatever works).

The world is starting to forget, and its memories are pooling into the dungeon. The dungeon is ever-present and you can always find an entrance if you know where to look. All manner of strange things, unknown histories, and storied artifacts have trickled in, as well as the people who seek to recover them. Some want their past, some want power, some want truth, and some want redemption. All of them want to survive and get out, but the dungeon resists.

One of you will play the Record Keeper. It will be their job to present the Threats that populate the dungeon and to speak for the other peoples within the dungeon.

The rest of you will play as members of the party, your group of scavengers, heroes, thieves, and scholars. You have been hired, volunteered, or forced into this - but to get out you will need to work together. As a group, read the party principles aloud together. These are the most important tenets of play for you, whether you play a delver or the Record Keeper. Try to keep them in mind as play progresses and stop to refresh yourselves if you feel like you've forgotten.

Party Principles

- Fill the dungeon with mystery
- Live dangerously, live passionately
- Find clever solutions to your problems
- Build together

Fill the dungeon with mystery: don't assume you know perfectly well how the dungeon works - none of us do. No one has even the slightest inkling of what it holds, how long it has been here, or who built it. No one is the master of the dungeon. Every time someone enters the dungeon, it is in a different configuration, with a different environment, and filled with different threats. No two dungeons are the same.

As a player, fill the dungeon with questions that you are interested in seeing answered, and try to find out what the answers are as you play. Trust in your friends to say and do interesting things, to provoke an understanding of what the dungeon is and what secrets it holds. Don't plan out what you want to happen: the dungeon will thwart you.

Think about your character similarly – you don't know everything about your past, your present, or your future. As you play, be open to revelation. Embrace uncertainty in the dungeon.

Live dangerously, live passionately: in the dungeon, any moment could be your last. But any moment could also be a chance at greatness; at happiness; at truth. You must take those moments with purpose and clarity of vision. Do not go headlong into danger, but also do not shy away from it. Think cleverly, but also think quickly.

As a player, don't be afraid to give the first answer that comes to your mind. Indulge yourself in the things you find interesting and

exciting - don't spend time worrying about if your friends will like it. Trust that they will, or if they don't that your time on this world will be fleeting enough for it not to matter.

Find clever solutions to your problems: the dungeon will kill you if you let it. It will chew you up and swallow your bones and your memories and your name. To survive in the dungeon, you will have to be quick on your feet, but more importantly, you must cloak yourself in your wits. Find patterns and exploit them to survive. This is what the dungeon asks of you.

As a player, think of the dungeon as a series of puzzles. Your job is to learn how they work, what makes them tick, and to solve them before they kill you. The unfortunate thing is that you won't find the solutions on your character sheet. You might be able to solve an enemy by killing it, but it would be just as quick and not nearly as dangerous to sneak around it, to confound it, to find a different path, or to befriend it. Not every enemy will be amenable to this - this is where your cleverness must factor in.

Build together: you don't need to be glued to each other at all times, but if you turn on your party, you will be destroyed. If you want to get out of the dungeon alive, you'll have to work together.

As players, encourage each other. When it's hard, support each other. Pay attention to what your friends are feeling, what they're doing, and what they're saying. Ask for help when you need it. Offer help when you can. If you're describing a room, or coming up with an item, and you're not sure how to do it - ask for help. If you're uncomfortable with what's going on in the game, or with something someone said: please take care of yourself. I know it's hard. I know it's scary. But it is their role, both as a player in this game and as your friend, to listen to you and to care.

Close your eyes to these...

Before you enter the dungeon, you must cast off the things that cling to you. Declare, if you want, something to cast off from your mind before you enter.

Anything that you do not feel ready to confront should be cast off here. Perhaps you will be ready to face it in another time, in another dungeon, with another group, but that needn't mean you are ready to face it now. All things come with time.

Some examples might be violence targeting a specific body part like eyes or teeth; perhaps you carry a fear of spiders and do not wish to face any within the dungeon; or maybe you aren't ready to confront abuse in the dungeon.

Whatever your friends cast off, respect these decisions. Honor their trust and vulnerability – do not let that which they have cast off find its way into the dungeon.

Remember to **build together**. Take care of each other when you delve. One of your friends might not realize that they aren't ready to confront something until they encounter it in the dungeon – respect them and their needs and help them avoid it until they are ready.

Records of Spirit and Flesh

Characters in Delver are defined by resources, gear, and the interactions they have with each other. The three resources every character manages are **Health**, **Stamina**, and **Focus**. Keep track of these on a character sheet, or whatever you have to write on.

Health is your physical wellbeing, and it depletes as you are wounded in battle. It can be restored with items, spells, and rest. Health is only relevant in Combat.

Stamina is your short-term energy, and it depletes as you take actions in the world. It restores itself periodically; after every round of combat, and after every round of exploration actions. Stamina factors into the Combat and Exploration phases, but not Downtime.

Focus is your long-term energy, and it depletes as you take actions of particular difficulty or intricacy, such as casting spells, activating certain items, executing impressive feats, or resisting effects. It can be restored in the Downtime Phase when you take time to yourself and Reflect.

Character Creation

Everyone besides the Record Keeper makes a character. All characters start out with 10 Health, 10 Stamina, and 10 Focus.

While everyone else is making characters, the Record Keeper should read the How To Play The Record Keeper section (page 48). If the Record Keeper is still reading after you have made your choices, read ahead to see what you might need to know.

Overview

- Pick a background
- Pick a gift
- Pick your raiment
- Pick your goals

Backgrounds

Your background represents your character's history, but it won't lock you out of anything. You can become anything here.

Apostate

- *A wielder of dangerous magic frowned upon by society.*
- Arcane Rod, Tongue of Flame, Axe, a vial of blood

Bard

- *A storyteller and songwriter with a tongue as sharp as their sword.*
- Shortsword, Shortbow, an instrument of your choosing

Berserker

- *A warrior driven only by rage.*
- Greatsword

Bloodletter

- *A professional killer.*
- Stiletto, Stiletto, a mask

Doctor

- *A physician who relies on wisdom over faith.*

- Dagger, Axe, Medicinal Salve, a child's toy

Hero

- *A loudmouthed braggart and self-appointed savior.*
- Shield, a ceremonial longsword

Hunter

- *A tireless tracker with a keen eye.*
- Longbow, Dagger, a pressed flower

Mesmer

- *A practitioner of magic that defies categorization.*
- Arcane Rod, Minor Illusion, Dagger, a magnifying glass

Naturalist

- *A hermit, wise in the old ways.*
- Wand of Holly, Claw (spell), Buckler, an acorn

Neophyte

- *A mender of hearts and bodies, robed in faith.*
- Sacred Bell, Healing Whisper, Flail, a symbol of divinity

Officer

- *A member of nobility cast aside.*
- Rapier, Buckler, Medicinal Potions, an inlaid flask

Scavenger

- *An untethered forager abandoned to the dirt.*
- DETERMINATION

Sellsword

- *A mercenary for hire.*
- Shield, Longsword, a compass

Strider

- *A nomadic scholar full of knowledge.*
- Quarterstaff, Binoculars, a magic ring

Warden

- *A stalwart warrior pledged to protect.*
- Shield, Spear, a locket with a faded portrait

Witch

- *A wretched wielder of unknown magics.*
- Wreath of Flame, unloved hands

Gifts

These are benefits to differentiate your character from your friends'. This choice can be changed, but it is much more difficult.

- **Experience:** you have 12 Health, Stamina, and Focus instead of 10
- **Brutality:** you may choose to take up to 3 damage to increase the damage of the next Attack you make by twice the amount you took.
- **Curiosity:** you have experience and familiarity with unsavory environments. When you Salvage in an area no one else will touch, it doesn't cost Stamina.
- **Kindness:** mercy is a balm for the giver as well as the receiver. When you have the opportunity to hurt someone and you do not take it, recover your Focus.
- **Hope:** you have an air of kindness about you. If there is ever any question of whether you can convince someone to back down, cool off, or work with you, you can if you spend 3 Focus.
- **Trusty:** you are exceptionally good at keeping a low profile. If there is ever any question of whether you can sneak past, deceive, or distract someone, you can if you spend 3 Focus.
- **Vision:** your dreams often give you visions of the future. When you enter the Downtime Phase, Scout one room for free and treat it as if you had Avoided Danger.
- **Trance:** violence recenters you. When you deal damage, you recover half that much Focus rounded down.
- **Shelter:** your arms are a haven. When you Block, you can take hits for other characters as if they had targeted you.
- **Reflex:** when there is a question of who goes first, it's you. Your actions during the Combat Phase happen before everyone else's – resolve them first.

- **Intuition:** you know beasts, wild things, and unthinking instinct better than you understand people. Tell the Record Keeper to always treat Monsters as People when they interact with you. They'll understand.
- **Keen:** you are exceptionally good at identifying people and enemies in the dungeon. When the Record Keeper makes an enemy before combat, you get to say its name and can assign tags to its attacks with the Record Keeper.
- **Contravention:** you know how to break rules and avoid the consequences – no one can make you do anything you don't want to. Tell the Record Keeper that you are immune to any repercussions from Curse Moves that they make. They'll understand.
- **Juggernaut:** nothing can stop you or hold you back. Tell the Record Keeper that you are immune to any repercussions from Trap Moves that they make. They'll understand.
- **Threatening:** any weapon you wield has [Mighty 4]. Tell the Record Keeper that you are an ax in their hands. They'll understand.
- **Diligence:** it is nigh impossible to get the drop on you. The cost to Scout and Avoid Danger is the lower of your weapon's Heft and 2.
- **Influence:** you catch and hold the attention of others with ease. You can give your allies your Stamina or Focus by spending it and saying something to bolster or encourage them.
- **Discipline:** you have undergone intense combat training. Any weapon you wield gains the [Parry] tag.
- **Arcana:** you have mastered the magical arts. Spells you cast cost half the normal Focus (Stamina is unchanged).
- **Historian:** you may add an additional detail whenever someone describes the memories of an item.
- **Plucky:** no effect. Good luck out there.

Raiment

Raiment is purely aesthetic and can't be damaged or lost - it's your own self-image, your own memory of what you wear. If you have lost your raiment, you have lost yourself.

Framed another way: when you reach a pivotal moment, grow as a person, or become someone new, consider changing your raiment. If you do change your raiment, let your friends know.

Fluted Armor: Armor, Ornate, Ancient

Scholar's Robes: Clothes, Academic, Tidy

Makeshift Plate: Armor, Handmade, Rusty

Sorcery Apron: Arcane, Smudged, Durable

Temple Knight Armor: Armor, Religious, Gleaming

Jester Regalia: Clothes, Costume, Colorful

Falconer Gloves: Clothes, Sturdy, Scarred

Rusted Diadem: Gleaming, Rusty, Expensive

Lemon Crest: Towering, Oppressive, Yellow

Sacred Killer's Guard: Macabre, Horned, Bloodstained

Trusty Patchwork Cloak: Clothes, Pockets, Ragged

Maiden's Dress: Clothes, Ornate, Ancient

Rags: Clothes, Ragged, Dirty

Witch's Dress: Arcane, Macabre, Pockets

Liar's Suit: Clothes, Smart, Fraying

Stonespeaker Robes: Clothes, Elegant, Dirty

Healer's Smock: Clothes, Durable, Clean

Leathers and Furs: Armor, Durable, Ragged

White-Gold Chains: Armor, Gleaming, Chained

Iron Manacles: Armor, Rusty, Bound

Steel Eyes: Sharp, Subtle, Stony

Soft Eyes: Uncertain, Kind, Gentle

Cold Eyes: Closed-off, Calculating, Distant

Laughing Eyes: Warm, Jolly, Inviting

Stormy Eyes: Heated, Quick, Suspicious

Scarred Arms: Armor, Powerful, Damaged

Open Arms: Tender, Calm, Hopeful

Extraneous Soma: Carapace, Sleek, Reflexive

Unknowable Form: Angular, Ethereal, Macabre

Character Goals

Everyone who does what you do has a reason. What's yours?

Think of this list as generative; these goals are springboards into something interesting and personal to your character. You needn't pick a goal specifically from this list, but perhaps it can be an inspiration for you.

Character goals are one source of Experience. When you complete your character goal, mark 1 Experience.

-
- Recover your family's lost heirloom
 - Find your friend or sibling deep in the dungeon
 - Seek out knowledge long-lost
 - Protect one of your allies
 - Get revenge on someone who hurt you
 - Find your lost animals
 - Seal away something that should not exist
 - Achieve or avoid your fated destiny
 - Achieve or avoid your impending doom

Party Goals

Choose this as a group. Think of this as a flag to the Record Keeper – this will tell them what kinds of Threats you are interested in seeing in the dungeon. Keep your party goal largely undefined as you start play, but keep it in the back of your mind – this is one way to determine when you have finished play.

-
- Survive, get paid, repeat
 - Recover an important relic
 - Rescue someone lost
 - Destroy a storied foe
 - Find a secret
 - Restore someone's memory

Gear

Your gear is all the material stuff you carry with you through the dungeon. Anything that you possess or carry with you, besides your raiment, is gear.

Load

Your Load is the amount of stuff you are carrying. Add up the Heft of all of your gear: weapons and items - including spells; this is your Load. Treat each item without a Heft tag as if it had 1 Heft for the purposes of Load.

If your Load is less than or equal to your maximum Stamina, you're fine. If your Load is greater than your maximum Stamina, take the difference as a penalty to your Stamina during the combat and Exploration Phases.



Weapons

Every weapon has a **Heft** tag. Heftier weapons will be more likely to land and deal more damage, at the cost of requiring more Stamina to Attack and Dodge with.

This list and the lists that follow are a set of examples. When Salvaging, you can pick an item on this list, if you wish, or make one up wholecloth. Don't feel constrained to the lists. More on Salvaging in the Exploration Phase section (page 33).

Note: every person in the dungeon has their Fists at all times, but can only use them when they wield no other weapons.

Dagger: 2 Heft, 3 Grade, Close

Shortsword: 3 Heft, 2 Grade, Close

Longsword: 4 Heft, 3 Grade, Close

Axe: 4 Heft, 3 Grade, Close

Flail: 4 Heft, 3 Grade, Close

Rapier: 3 Heft, 3 Grade, Close, [Reach]

Hammer: 6 Heft, 4 Grade, Close, Messy, Heavy

Spear: 3 Heft, 3 Grade, Reach

Quarterstaff: 4 Heft, 3 Grade, Parry, Close, [Reach]

Stiletto: 2 Heft, 2 Grade, Touch, Vorpai

Greatsword: 5 Heft, 3 Grade, Close

Fist: 2 Heft, Touch, Weightless, [5 Heft]+[Double-Edged]

Dragon Buster: 12 Heft, 12 Grade, 3 Guard, Reach, [Area]

Shortbow: 3 Heft, 7 Grade, Far, Ammo, [Close]+[Reach]

Longbow: 5 Heft, 4 Grade, Far, Ammo

Giantkiller Bow: 7 Heft, 3 Grade, Far, Ammo, [Close]

Buckler: 2 Heft, 5 Grade, Touch, 2 Guard, [Parry]

Shield: 4 Heft, 5 Grade, Touch, 3 Guard

Tower Shield: 6 Heft, 6 Grade, Touch, 5 Guard

Sacred Bell: 2 Heft, 2 Grade, Talisman

Arcane Rod: 2 Heft, 2 Grade, Catalyst

Fire Bombs: 5 Heft, 3 Grade, Ammo, Reach, Messy, [Area]

Halberd: 5 Heft, 3 Grade, Reach, [Area]+[Close]

Whip: 3 Heft, 2 Grade, Reach, Subdual, [Parry]

Bladed Whip: 4 Heft, 2 Grade, Reach

Moon Blessed Blade: 4 Heft, 3 Grade, Close, Catalyst

Temple Bell: 7 Heft, 7 Grade, Reach, Talisman, Holy

Phantom Killer Knife: 3 Heft, 2 Grade, Close, [Invisible]

Ignitrix's Hatchet: 3 Heft, 3 Grade, Close, [Flaming]

Singing Spear: 3 Heft, 1 Grade, Reach, [Far]+[Subdual]



Items

Items are a catch-all for non-weapons. They include spells as well as non-spell items. All items without a Heft tag are treated as having 1 Heft for the purposes of Load.

Binoculars: [Alert]

Torch: 3 Grade, Ammo, Alert, Flaming

Wand of Holly: 6 Grade, Ammo, Talisman

Medicinal Potions: 2 Heft, 2 Grade, Healing, Ammo

Medicinal Salve: 3 Heft, 2 Grade, Healing, Ammo, Touch

Blade Toxins: 3 Grade, Poison, Applied, Ammo

Healing Whisper: 2 Drain, Sacrament, Healing, 2 Linging, Touch

Healing Shout: 4 Drain, Sacrament, Healing, 1 Linging, Reach, [Area]

Claw: 3 Drain, Sacrament, Close, Messy, Poisoned

Fang: 2 Drain, Sacrament, Close, Vorpil, Poisoned

Tongue of Flame: 3 Drain, Magery, Reach, Flaming

Maw of Flame: 7 Drain, Magery, Touch, Flaming

Minor Illusion: 2 Drain, Magery, Subdual, 2 Linging, Far

Major illusion: 4 Drain, Magery, Subdual, 2 Linging, Far

Unseen: 3 Drain, Magery, Harmless, Invisible, 1 Linging

Cloak: 6 Drain, Magery, Harmless, Invisible, 2 Linging, Reach, [Area]

Hammer of God: 8 Drain, Sacrament, Reach, Holy, Messy

Shield of Faith: 3 Drain, Sacrament, Harmless, 4 Guard, 1 Linging, [2 Linging]

Wreath of Flame: 5 Drain, Close, Area, Hex, Flaming



Tags

A tag is either Passive or Focus. Passive tags are always in effect. You can invoke a Focus tag for 2 Focus, in which case the item gains that tag for a round. Focus Tags are denoted by square brackets around the tag like so: [Reach].

Two or more Focus tags may be linked [like]+[this]. In such a case, treat them as if they were one tag, activated for 2 Focus like any other.

If the Focus Tag is the same as one of the tags the weapon already has (for instance, a Heft tag with a different Heft value), or if the tag is a range tag, replace the Passive Tag with the Focus one.

If you feel like there isn't a tag for the mechanical or fictional effect an item needs, feel free to make one up. If the tag is powerful, your friends will give any items that have it commensurate downsides. Focus on the fiction of the item, rather than the balance of the tag itself.

Alert (mechanical, cue)

The cost to Avoid Danger is the lower of your weapon's Heft and 2.

Ammo (mechanical)

Whenever you use this item (to Attack, heal, or whatever else) reduce its Grade by 1.

Applied (constraint)

This effect can't be used on yourself.

Area (constraint)

This weapon or effect hits everything in its range.

Area: [Range] (constraint)

This weapon or effect hits one target in range, and then everything within [Range] of them.

Catalyst (constraint)

This item allows you to cast Mageries while you wield it.

Close (constraint, a range)

This weapon or effect has a range of about 2-4 feet, or the range of most melee weapons held in hand.

Cocked (constraint, mechanical)

This weapon or effect can only be used once per round in the Combat and Exploration Phases.

Combustible (cue)

This weapon or effect causes spontaneous and uncontrollable burning to anything it touches.

Cursed (cue)

This item is cursed, and may turn on you at the least opportune moment. Tell the Record Keeper to treat it as a potential Threat.

Double-Edged (mechanical, constraint)

When you deal damage with this weapon or effect, you take half that much damage rounded up.

Far (constraint, a range)

This weapon or effect has a range of ten or more feet.

Flaming (cue)

This weapon or effect is wreathed in fire. It provides a steady light and can be used to burn flammable material.

Flight (cue)

This item allows you to fly.

Food (mechanical, cue)

This item can be eaten, but when it's eaten it's consumed entirely.

Grade (mechanical)

How much wear and tear the item can suffer before it stops functioning.

Guard (mechanical)

This weapon or effect can function as a shield.

Heft (mechanical)

How heavy, and dangerous, a weapon is. An item with Heft can be wielded on its own to hurt someone. Heft determines how much Stamina it costs to Attack and Dodge in the Combat Phase, and to Scout and Avoid Danger in the Exploration Phase. Heft determines how many dice you roll to Attack, and how much damage your Attack does.

Healing (mechanical)

This item or effect heals an amount equal to its Heft or Drain. Applying or using it costs Stamina equal to its Heft or Drain, but you do not roll to hit.

Holy (cue)

This weapon or effect is wrought to destroy the profane - demons, undead, specters, and all manner of unholy thing.

Huge (cue)

This weapon or effect is massive and unwieldy. It easily gets in your way or hampers your movement.

Intimate (constraint, a range)

You must be physically intimate with them to affect them.

Invisible (cue)

You cannot be seen by normal means while you wield this item or are under this effect.

Messy (cue)

This weapon or effect often causes obvious, and reckless damage to the target or whatever it hits.

n Mighty (mechanical, enemy only)

This weapon or effect does an additional n damage when it hits. This does not affect the Stamina cost to Attack.

Preparation (constraint)

This effect can't be used during the Combat phase.

Parry (mechanical)

When you Dodge an Attack while holding this weapon you automatically deal damage equal to its Heft, so long as you are in the appropriate range.

Poisoned (mechanical)

This weapon or effect has a deadly toxin. Whenever you successfully deal damage with it, the enemy takes 1 damage at the start of the next round.

Profane (cue)

This weapon or effect is cursed, demonic, or damned. It is inimical to the blessed and the righteous.

Reach (constraint, a range)

This weapon or effect has a range of about 4-8 feet, or the length of a spear.

Swift (mechanical)

Your first Dodge per round in the Combat Phase costs no Stamina.

Subdual (constraint, mechanical)

This weapon or effect does its damage to Stamina instead of Health. This lowers the defender's Stamina at the start of the next round.

Talisman (constraint)

This weapon allows you to cast Sacraments while you wield it.

Touch (constraint, a range)

This weapon or effect must be delivered from close enough to the target that one could touch them with their palm.

Vorpal (mechanical)

This weapon or effect deals double damage if all the dice rolled to use it roll the same number, if it is used on someone who is Staggered, or if it is used on an unaware enemy.

Weightless (mechanical)

Ignore this item when calculating your Load.

Magic

Magic is a powerful force in the world. It can smite an enemy or mend a wound with just a few gestures, some incantations, and a splash of concentration. Collectively, actions performed through magic are called spells.

Spells are items in Delver – they are physi-magical manifestations of power. They carry weight and memory with them in the dungeon. You can Salvage them just like any other item.

Spells cost Focus, take Stamina, do damage, and roll dice with the same number: the spell's **Drain**. By default, the effects of a spell only last for the round in which the spell is cast. Spells can have tags just like any other item, but there are some tags that only affect spells.

Harmless (mechanical, spell)

The spell cannot be used to do damage. If it affects an unwilling person, you must still roll to hit as you usually would.

n Lingering (mechanical, spell)

The spell lasts n rounds before fading. Healing, Harming, and Subdual spells function as normal on the first round, and then heal or do damage equal to their Drain on each following round.

Hex (mechanical, constraint)

Every round in the Combat Phase that you do not pay Focus equal to the spell's Drain, it is cast whether you like it or not. You do not pay Focus or Stamina for a spell cast this way, and you don't need an implement to cast it. The Record Keeper chooses targets, if applicable. You can't cast this spell normally.

Mageries and Sacraments

The difference between mageries and sacraments is, primarily, a cultural one. There are many schools of magic, and many which claim that their techniques are unique, that they are bestowed by God or wrought from primordial forces, and with history fading, there are fewer and fewer ways to prove anyone's claims correct.

The truth, for most people in the dungeon, is that magic is magic. Whether cast by the gentle chime of a silver bell or flung from the end of a rotting chunk of driftwood, the spells you find on your expeditions will aid you just the same.

The spell list provided in this book is aligned with broad assumptions many people make about spells and their sources, but healing mageries and deceptive sacraments are far from impossible to find (or create).



Playing Delver

Delver has a specific flow to the game that play follows. You should read this whole section together before following its instructions.

Starting Play

After you've made your characters and chosen your party goal, start at the beginning of the dungeon. Everyone besides the Record Keeper say what weapons you wield at the start of the dungeon.

Then the oldest person playing – and you can lie – describes the entrance you take and the first room you step in, as if it were the Exploration Phase and they had Scouted (ignore the Stamina cost). You cannot Avoid Danger in the first room of the dungeon. Then continue as instructed by the rules of the various phases.

Example: Everyone compares their ages. Natalie is the oldest, at 420 years young.

She says: "The entrance of the dungeon is a tree out in your family's field. If you climb up the tree and fall asleep in its limbs, you will be taken to the dungeon."

They then turn to the Exploration Phase and read the Scout action.

"The first room of the dungeon is an enclosed stone room, with the same tree you fell asleep in."

Abe says: "The room smells like old wine, almost vinegary."

Ell says: "There's a whole bunch of casks on the walls here."

MK says: "One escape from this place is to find the oldest cask and take a sip."

Natalie says: "Another escape is to destroy all of the casks."

Abe says: "There is the sound of conversation coming from the casks, and that draws us into the room."

They decide they don't want to answer any more questions.

Then Natalie says: “there’s someone here, at the foot of the tree. They say ‘what are you doing in here?’ in an angry voice. What do you do?”

The Phases of Play

Play is separated into three phases: the Exploration Phase (page 33), the Downtime Phase (page 44), and the Combat Phase (page 38). You will move back and forth between the various phases without any particular order. The party will decide most of the time when and how the phase changes, but the Record Keeper has final say on whether or not a phase is possible - some places are too dangerous to rest or explore, and their Threats must be dealt with first. Sometimes, the Record Keeper will get to declare the Combat Phase without the party choosing it at all.

As you move between phases, keep track of your Stamina. It refreshes between rounds, but not between phases. If you Scout when you are low on Stamina, be careful of whatever enemies you may encounter – you might not be able to defend yourself.

The only condition on changing phases is that the party cannot take two Downtime Phases in a row.

Example: After the party defeats the wine guard in a contest of riddles, Abe turns to Ell and MK and says, “I’m kind of low on Focus. Can we take a Downtime Phase?.” MK says, “oh my gosh yeah, I want to talk with the Doctor.” Afterwards, they go back to Exploring.

Ending Play

Stop playing when you’ve run out of time together, or when the party completes their party goal. If the party completes their goal before you have to stop playing, they are rewarded in wealth,

power, satisfaction, or nothing at all. If not, they return empty handed and must try again at their goal.

If anyone completed their personal goal, they should cross it off, write in a new one, and mark 1 Experience, or else retire their character.

When you play again, pick a new party goal if you successfully completed the last one, or else go back and try to finish the incomplete party goal. Be warned - the dungeon and its dangers will have changed since you last delved.



The Exploration Phase

When characters are exploring, scouting, salvaging, or engaging with the Threats in the dungeon without violence, they are in the Exploration Phase. During the Exploration Phase, the party will describe what they do in the rooms of the dungeon. If there is a Threat there, the Record Keeper will tell them what it does. Most of the things that the party says and does are resolved by the whole group, or if they're interacting with a Threat, by the Record Keeper.

Sometimes you will say something special, something that has special mechanical weight. When you pick up an item, receive a gift, or take something from someone, you are Salvaging. When you escape from the room you are in, you are Scouting. When you do so carefully, without letting anything get the drop on you, you are Avoiding Danger at the same time.

Stamina refreshes at the start of each Round, minus any Overextension penalties. A round in the Exploration Phase ends when every party member's Stamina is 0 or less.

Scout

Scouting allows you to describe the features of the dungeon you explore together, and add them to your collective map (whether it is physical or just in your imagination).

Scouting costs Stamina equal to your weapon's Heft. When you Scout, describe a room in the dungeon connected to the one you are currently in, in as much or as little detail as you want. Then everyone takes turns answering questions from the list:

- What is an interesting feature that it has?
- What does it smells like?
- What draws you to it?
- How can you escape from it?

The Record Keeper will tell you if there are any Threats in it and how they pose a danger to you.

Example: The Mesmer, MK' character, scouts a new room by drinking from the oldest cask of wine. They grip their dagger tight – it costs 2 Stamina to Scout. MK describes the room. “As we drink the wine, the room twists in our vision. When our eyes refocus, we’re in the same room, but the casks are replaced with bookshelves.”

Abe says: “the books tell our life stories, and the knowledge of what is to come draws us in.”

Natalie says: “the room smells like old ash and pine.”

Ell says: “I think this time an escape is to write in the ending of our own stories.”

They decide that is enough for the questions.

Avoid Danger

Avoiding Danger is staying vigilant against whatever Threats the Record Keeper might put in a room, whether they be traps, curses, hidden enemies, or other explorers in the dungeon. Avoid Danger is similar to Dodge in the Combat Phase.

Avoiding Danger costs Stamina equal to your weapon's Heft. When you Avoid Danger, you avoid springing the next Threat the Record Keeper would introduce. You can identify the Threat and choose how to avoid or approach it on your own terms.

Example: But the Mesmer Avoided Danger when they Scouted. “I think if you let yourself, you could read these books forever. Oh, but you Avoided Danger. I think you can recognize that dangerous impulse in yourself, and you stop before you open the books. What do you do?”

Salvage

Salvaging allows you to find lost, forgotten, or unwanted items in the dungeon.

Salvaging costs 5 Stamina. Any given room can only be Salvaged in twice. When you Salvage, propose the item to your friends that you want to find. Describe what it looks like, what it does, what secrets it might hide, and suggest some tags that would be appropriate.

If anyone feels the item is inappropriate or too powerful, they can add a tag that would complicate its use, make one of the Passive Tags into a Focus Tag, or Link two or more Focus Tags together. If anyone feels that the item is still inappropriate or too powerful, they can veto it; start anew with a different item. If everyone is okay with the item, write it on your character sheet.

When introducing an item, feel free to create weapons, spells, or regular items. The item you create doesn't even have to have tags: perhaps it is a key to a yet to be found door, a painting of inestimable beauty, or preserved food to be shared with your companions. Introduce an item you would be interested in seeing, or that would complicate the party's lives in interesting ways.

When you Salvage an item, the lingering memories of its previous owner wash over you. Ask a friend to describe who used the item and what they used it for. Alternatively, ask them to describe the place it was made in and what purpose it was made for. Whatever they say, write it down in such a way that it can be deleted or destroyed later.

Example: Ell, as the Strider, decides to Salvage. Ze picks up a book off the shelf and reads the cover; it's the story of zer missing friend's life. Ell decides that reading the book brings comfort to the Strider and can heal them. Ze gives it the tags "4 Heft, Healing, 1 Grade, Weightless."

MK feels like the book probably takes some time to use, so they suggest adding the "Preparation" tag. Everyone agrees that that is for the best, and Ell writes down "Book of Memories: 4 Heft, Healing, 1 Grade, Weightless, Preparation."

Ell turns to Natalie and asks her to describe who last used the book and what they used it for. Natalie thinks for a moment and decides that the last person who used it was Grandfather Time, and he used it to determine a person's destiny before they were ever born.

Swap Weapons

You can swap your weapons whenever you please, but it takes some time.

Swapping weapons costs two Stamina. Say which of your weapons you now wield. You can wield two weapons if you want, but use the higher of their Hefts for the purposes of Scouting and Avoiding Danger.

You cannot attack with weapons you aren't wielding.

Example: The Doctor is carrying an Axe, which is 4 Heft, and they're at 7 Stamina. It makes the most sense for them to be the one to Scout, but then they will have an Overextension penalty if they get into combat.

The cost to Scout and Avoid Danger with the Axe is 4 Stamina. The cost to Scout and Avoid Danger with just the Doctor's fists is 2 Stamina. Swap Weapon costs 2 Stamina.

Abe decides to Swap Weapons (2 Stamina) by putting away the Axe and just have their fists at the ready. Then, they can Scout (2 Stamina) and Avoid Danger (2 Stamina), and it will save Stamina compared to if they had Scouted (4 Stamina) and Avoided Danger (4 Stamina).



The Combat Phase

Each round of the Combat Phase, characters choose actions and allocate resources. Each round is an abstraction, temporally speaking, so don't worry about precise timing. All actions take place at the same time and resolve together.

Even so, certain effects are resolved before others, in the interest of maintaining a cohesive combat narrative. The order of operations in combat is as follows:

1. Stamina refreshes, and then Stamina damage from the previous round and Stamina penalties from Load or Overextension take effect.
2. Lingering effects, including healing, poison, environmental effects, etc. take effect.
 - a. Apply healing first,
 - b. Then damage,
 - c. Then miscellaneous effects afterward.
3. All players and enemies attack, defend themselves, etc.

If you choose an action that would bring you below 0 Stamina, you may perform that action at the cost of taking an Overextension penalty to your starting Stamina on the next round equal to the difference between the Stamina you have and the Stamina you would spend.

Example: Natalie describes three guardians in the Room of Stories: Lightning, who wields three swords; Rain, with three bows; and Hail, with three hammers. The three of them face off against the three members of the party.

Ell decides to Block for the round, leaving zer Stamina at 10. MK declares that they will cast Minor Illusion on Rain, Goad Hail once, and Dodge three times, total 10 Stamina.

Abe decides to Attack Hail twice with their Axe, and Dodge once.

Natalie then reveals that each of the guardians is attacking each of their respective targets thrice. The sword, bow, and hammer all have 4 Heft, the first and third with the Close tags, the second with the Far tag.

Attack

Attacking is your primary method of dispatching foes. You cannot Attack and Block in the same round.

Every Attack costs Stamina equal to the weapon's Heft. You may Attack as many times with your wielded weapons in one round as you wish, keeping in mind overextension penalties.

Once you have chosen a target, describe how you Attack them and roll dice equal to the weapon's Heft. Compare the results to the target's Might. Dice that meet or exceed the target's Might are called successes. If your roll produces 1 success, the Attack lands and the enemy takes damage equal to the weapon's Heft. Any additional successes increase the damage of the attack by 1 per success.

If your roll has no successes, you have 3 options:

1. Your Attack misses, dealing no damage.
2. Your Attack lands anyway, but you take an Overextension penalty to your Stamina on the next round equal to the weapon's Heft.
3. Your Attack lands anyway, but you damage your weapon, reducing its Grade by 1. If your weapon has no Grade, you cannot choose to reduce it.
4. Your Attack lands anyway, but you take a hit to do it, taking 1 damage.

Example: The Doctor, Abe's character, makes two Attacks at Hail. They roll dice equal to its Heft, four six-sided dice, and get [6, 1, 3, 2]. Natalie tells them that Hail is Might 2, so they get three Successes. The first makes their Attack hit, and the other two provide a point of bonus damage each. Six damage from the first Attack!

They roll again, but this time they get [1, 1, 1, 1]. Unlucky! With no Successes, they miss. Abe decides that they manage to get the hit, but their Axe is damaged by Hail's hammers. Its Grade is reduced by one. Four damage from the second Attack.

Dodge

Dodging is your only means of protecting yourself while on the offensive. The amount of Stamina a Dodge costs is equal to your equipped weapon's Heft. You may Dodge as many times in one round as you wish, keeping in mind overextension penalties. When you Dodge, you completely avoid one incoming attack or spell.

If you are wielding two weapons, the cost to Dodge is the higher of the weapons' Heft.

Example: MK Dodged three times. When Rain attacks them thrice, all three of the attacks miss. They take no damage! Abe only Dodged once, so two of the attacks hit the Doctor, dealing their Heft in damage.

Block

Blocking is your most effective way to defend yourself, but it takes strength and focus. You cannot Block and Attack in the same round. When you Block an Attack, the incoming damage is

reduced by your shield's Guard score, and any remaining damage is applied to your Stamina before your Health.

Example: Ell blocked, even though they have no shield. Ze reduces incoming damage by zer Guard, which is zero, and then apply that damage to zer Stamina before zer Health. Lightning's attack has 4 Heft, so ze takes four damage from each attack. The first two are fully blocked by zer Stamina, but the last one gets in two points of damage.

Goad

By goading your enemy, you can drive them into a heedless rage. This is useful against enemies who tend to keep their guard up, but watch out - you'll have to survive their attacks against you.

Goaded costs Stamina equal to your weapon's Heft, and is resolved as if you were making an Attack. The number of successes you roll is how many rounds the enemy will focus on you, provided that you cause it damage or pain during each of those rounds.

Goaded enemies will not defend themselves, even if they have the chance to.

Example: MK Goaded Hail. They roll the Heft of their weapon, a dagger, and gets [5, 1]. That's one success, so starting in the next round, Hail will only attack them. Unfortunately for the Doctor, that doesn't prevent it from attacking other targets in this round.

Swap Weapon

You can swap your weapon whenever you please, but it takes some time.

Swapping weapons costs two Stamina. Say which of your weapons you now wield. You can wield two weapons if you want, but use the higher of their Hefts for the purposes of Scouting and Avoiding Danger.

You cannot attack with weapons you aren't wielding.

Example: The Strider takes up zer Quarterstaff from zer back. Ze is determined to protect the book ze recently acquired. After the two Stamina for swapping weapons, ze has just enough Stamina to Attack twice.

Run Away

You can always run away. It costs no Stamina, though you might need to Dodge or Block in order to survive running away.

Whatever you were fighting might chase you, or might stay where it is. You can run past it into an unexplored room, or back the way you came. If you run past, treat it as the Exploration phase, but tell the Record Keeper that whatever you were fighting is an ax hanging above your head. They'll understand.

Example: Later in the dungeon, when the Party comes upon Grandfather Time, they realize he is too powerful for them to defeat in their current state. They decide that rather than burn all their memories trying in vain to kill him, they will run away and regroup before facing him again.

Life and Death

Health is the most important resource available to you. You must guard it preciously. You have 10 Health by default, 12 with the Specialty gift.

To preserve your health during the Combat Phase, Dodge or Block. To guard against surprise Threats during the Exploration Phase, Avoid Danger. To restore your health during the Downtime Phase, Rest.

When your Health is reduced to 0 or less, you can burn memories instead of dying. If you do, restore your Health to full and mark 1 Experience. When you burn the memories of the things you've found in the dungeon, erase them from your inventory. When you burn your own memories, choose a new Character Goal from the character creation section. When you burn other people's memories of you,



The Downtime Phase

At any point during the Downtime Phase, you may change your current Gift to any of the Gifts available to you.

Unlike the combat and Exploration Phases, the Downtime Phase doesn't involve Stamina at all. Instead, everyone besides the Record Keeper gets one action from the following list:

Rest

Resting allows you to lick your wounds and recover your strength. Rest when you are concerned about whether or not you will survive the next fight.

When you rest, recover your Health. What do you find restful in the dungeon? Where do you recover?

Example: The Mesmer was wounded in the battle against Grandfather Time. They take the chance to rest and recover their health. They find solitude and quiet reflection the most restful. They go to a corner of the Room of Stories and sit by themselves until they recover their strength.

Repair

Repairing allows you to fix your weapons, fletch arrows, and take care of your gear.

When you Repair, pick an item and restore its Grade to full. How do you take care of it? What do you use in its repair?

Example: The Doctor ran out of Medicinal Salve while fighting Grandfather Time. They decide to make some more to recover their stock while everything is calmer. They

tear out pages of the books in the room and feed them to their salve-worm.

Reflect

Reflecting allows you to think about your experiences, analyze what you have done so far in the dungeon, and learn from your mistakes. Reflect when you are low on Focus.

When you Reflect, restore your Focus and mark 1 Experience. Take a moment to write down some thoughts and feelings from your experiences in the dungeon. What did you struggle with? What did you excel at? How would you like to grow? If you don't have time, you don't have to write it down, or you can do it after the session ends.

Example: The Strider decides to Reflect on zer experiences so far. Ze takes a moment to read the book and find out about zer missing friend's destiny. It says that she is destined to be forgotten in the dungeon. The Strider worries that ze isn't strong enough to prevent that from happening. Ze takes the time to write down these worries while everyone else is taking their turn.

Connect

Connecting allows you to take a moment with your companions and talk about your feelings and what you've experienced in the dungeon.

When you connect, take one of your companions aside and talk to them about something that's been bothering you, something you need to get off of your chest, or something you want to celebrate. Moments of peace to talk to your companions are rare in the dungeon, so when the opportunity presents itself, take it.

Example: The Strider pulls the Doctor aside and confesses that ze is worried that ze won't be able to save zer friend. Ze tells them that ze is worried ze is too weak to do much of anything against Grandfather Time. Can they really reshape the destiny laid out for them?

The Doctor shrugs. "Why not?"

The Strider looks shocked at the idea. "Why... not?"

"Sure. The world is forgetting. Who's to say that it can't forget what it thought our paths should be. We don't have to be what they made for us."

The Strider sits down hard. The Doctor sits down next to them. They share a moment of silence together.



Experience and Growth

As you play Delver, your characters may grow and change. Here is how the game grows with them.

Changing Gifts

During the Downtime Phase, you can change your current Gift to any of the Gifts available to you.

Gaining Gifts

When you Reflect during the Downtime Phase, when you burn a memory to avoid dying, or when you complete your character goal, mark 1 Experience. Spend 5 Experience to make any one Gift available to you.

When you Connect with someone during the Downtime Phase, mark 1 Bond with them. Spend 3 Bond with someone to make one of their Gifts available to you.

Spending Experience

If you have accrued Experience or Bond and do not wish to spend it on making a Gift available to you, you may instead spend it 1 for 1 to:

- Ignore the effect of one Attack
- Make someone appear suddenly
- Ask someone a question that they must answer truthfully
- Modify the tags on a piece of Gear – make sure everyone is okay with it

How To Play The Record Keeper

You aren't the master of the dungeon. You aren't its caretaker. You aren't the person who has the final say on what happens here. Think of yourself as being just like your friends, but your character is the various and disparate Threats of the dungeon. You are here to bring them to life.

You aren't the master of this game either. There is exactly one thing that is yours to do in Delver: to play the Threats in the dungeon. You will help describe rooms and items, but you take no more special a role in that than any of your other friends.

Note that "adjudicating the rules" is not your role. You have no more authority over what tags to make, how to interpret tags, or what the rules of the game are than any other player. That is not what you do in this game. Share the responsibility with your friends.

"Keep the game running" is also not your role. The Record Keeper is not the only thing holding Delver together. You will make mistakes while playing this game – I certainly have. That will not make it any less fun or worthwhile for your friends. You are not the center of this game's universe.

Communicate this to your friends. Let them know that you aren't a special player in this game with more authority or more burden.

Principles

- Fill the dungeon with mystery
- Bring everything back to their histories
- Misdirect your Threats
- Build Threats as patterns

Fill the dungeon with mystery: You have much the same principle as the party does here. You don't have a special role in describing the rooms of the dungeon, or in making the items that are found in the dungeon, but you *do* create the Threats that inhabit the dungeon. The threats are just as much a part of the story you'll tell together as the items or the rooms. When you're creating Threats, think about what has been established by your friends and see how you can push on those questions. How can you build those ideas into the Threats you make?

And never, ever, assume you have the answers to those questions. Threats aren't the place where everything comes together - they're another springboard into the unknown.

Bring everything back to their histories: You can make as many interesting Threats as you want – none of them will be impactful if they don't resonate with the party. To make it resonate, bring it back to their histories, their desires, and their conflicts.

Open yourself to possibilities and ask. "Are they familiar to you?" is the strongest question you can ask them. It will give them the possibility that there is something here in their memory, something they're not quite sure of yet.

If you are given the chance, intertwine their histories, desires, and conflicts together. Make it messy and fraught.

Misdirect your Threats: when you present a Threat to your friends or make a move from the Threat's list, don't announce "this is a Trap" or say "I'm splitting you up." It very well might be a Trap, and you very well might be splitting them up, but rather than announce it, show them how it happens. You can say something like "you notice a groove along the bottom of the floor, bisecting the room. What do you do?" or maybe if they haven't Avoided

Danger, "as you enter the room a divider comes up from the bottom of the floor. The Bloodletter and Bard on one side, the Sellsword and Witch on another. What do you do?" Always say how it arises from the fiction.

It's not that you won't be picking your Threats and moves arbitrarily - you will. But to trick your friends into thinking that you know exactly what you're doing, pretend that you aren't. The best way to pretend you know what you're doing is to make your Threats and your moves arise from what has already been said.

Build Threats as patterns: think about the Threats you present to your friends as puzzles - not in that they only have one solution, because they don't - but because they are something to be worked out. Half of the fun of playing this game is trying to figure out how the Threats work, what their function is, and how to get past them.

As such, don't worry about having Threats be cunning - they're already deadly. The cunning ones are your friends who will defeat, sneak past, or otherwise circumvent the Threats. Give Threats simple, understandable motivations and simple, understandable patterns to their actions, and throw them at your friends. See what sticks.

This is especially true during the Combat Phase - enemies in Delver are deadly, all of them. Don't worry about trying to kill the Party, because it can happen without any effort on your part. Instead create patterns out of the enemies' attacks, and allow your friends to learn how to overcome them.

Threats

Threats are your main way of interacting with the party. After the room is fully described when someone Scouts, they will turn to you as if to say “what happens next?” In that moment, you must present your Threat. If they Avoided Danger before entering, describe the Threat and ask them “what do you do?” If they did not all Avoid Danger, make a move from the Threat’s list and ask them “what do you do”?

When they say what they do, it’s your job to determine what the Threat does next. There aren’t dice that will tell you, or specific rules. Trust your gut and judge accordingly. If you feel like they have understood the Threat and overcome it, then they move on. If they do something that would make them vulnerable to the Threat, make a move from the Threat’s list. Otherwise, continue describing the Threat and asking them what they do.

“Hang an ax above their heads” means just that - present a reason why they must overcome this Threat or else face peril. It could be a ceiling slowly lowering to crush them, the pounding of mechanical feet as a tomb guardian chases after them, or a poison running through some innocent dungeon dweller’s veins.

Note - you can’t damage the party except in combat. The slowly descending ceiling might very well be a peril, but you can’t kill them with it. They might fall into that pit, but they won’t die to it. Instead, think of these Threats as wearing them down, splitting them up, wasting time, or draining their resources.

Threat Types

- Traps (impulse: to capture, to maim)
- Curses (impulse: to control, to dominate)
- People (impulse: to survive, to sacrifice)
- Monsters (impulse: to drive out, to destroy)

Traps (impulse: to capture, to impede)

Traps are as much obstacles and blockades as they are literal traps. The point of a trap isn't to hurt; it's to stop. A series of riddles you must answer before you can move past a sphynx is a trap, but so is a deep pit covered by camouflage.

Trap moves

- Separate them
- Capture someone
- Damage their gear
- Hang an ax above their heads

Curses (impulse: to control, to dominate)

Curses are rules and laws writ flesh - they exist not to impede, like Traps, but to shape their victims. A Curse doesn't have to be magical - it might be poisonous gas released into a room whenever someone speaks, or a threat against a kidnapped victim if the party does not give over their weapons. But it can also be magical - a compulsion to give no mercy to evil, a geas against killing, or an imposed desire to appreciate beauty.

Curse moves

- Tell them the possible consequences and ask
- Activate their gear's downside
- Drain their Focus if they don't obey
- Hang an ax above their heads

People (impulse: to survive, to sacrifice)

People might be enemies, but they don't have to be. People are anything in the dungeon that can think, feel, and fear death. If it has no fear and does not long to escape the dungeon, it's not a Person.

People moves

- Make them trade
- Offer an opportunity, with or without cost
- Put them in a spot
- Hang an ax above their heads

Monsters (impulse: to drive out, to destroy)

Monsters are like people but they don't think, they don't feel, and they don't fear death. They live in the dungeon only as memories of violence. Monsters can be tricked or circumvented, but they can't be reasoned with. Some monsters produce magical effects that resemble spells; these effects are tagged and consume Stamina as if they were weapons. Monsters do not require implements to cause these effects.

To be clear, Monster is an ontological category here. If something starts to think, or feel, or fear death, it is no longer a Monster and you should not treat it as such.

Monster moves

- Hunt them
- Chase them
- Fight them
- Swing an axe at their heads

Enemies and Bosses

Making enemies and bosses before play isn't possible in Delver - your friends will be describing the terrain and the rooms of the dungeon, and you'll want to make sure the enemies you describe fit into the world you've created together.

While your friends are describing the dungeon, creating items and their histories, or resting, take time to think about what kind of enemies would be interesting in the dungeon. Write your ideas down but don't create the actual enemies.

You can skip the sections that follow until you enter the Combat Phase – come back and read them then.

Here is how we handle enemies in Delver: whenever you enter the Combat Phase, everyone takes a 5 minute break while you take one of the ideas you wrote down and turn it into an enemy.

That means: assign it a Might. Think of a couple of appropriate Attacks and give them tags that make sense for their function. It doesn't sound like much, because it isn't! It's very easy to make enemies in Delver, and it's a fun opportunity to flex your creativity.

Bosses are made in pretty much the same way as enemies; assign them a Might, give them two or three Attacks, and maybe think of some potential Phase Shifts.

Don't worry about writing down Phase Shifts immediately, however - you'll probably have figured out a cool one by the time it's necessary, and if not just take a 5 minute break and come up with one.

Tell your friends to treat the breaks like loading screens in a video game. Everyone else can get a chance to relax, talk about what cool stuff has happened, strategize about the upcoming encounter, or take care of their bodily functions.

Consider making a boss when:

- the party reaches a dramatic location
- you have an idea for a cool one
- the party asks you to
- the party least expects it

Combat as The Record Keeper

When you play as the enemies in combat, the structure will be slightly different than that of the party. You don't roll to attack - enemy attacks always hit, and they do damage equal to their Heft.

Most enemies don't Dodge - in general, only have the toughest and most dangerous enemies do so. Any enemy with an effect that has the Guard tag can block, and they should do so.

Follow your principles - make the enemy actions into patterns and stick to them. If you want to change up the pattern, communicate clearly that something is different about the enemy. Maybe when the enemy is badly injured they will back away and put up their shield and only Block attacks from then on.

Perhaps most importantly: don't be afraid to kill them.

Creating Enemies and Bosses

Enemies can be any Threat in the dungeon that the party can reasonably defeat with violence. All enemies and bosses have a score called **Might**. Might ranges from 1 to 6, and is used to measure how strong an enemy is.

Enemies:

- 1-2 Might: cannon fodder, mooks, introductory enemies.
- 3-4 Might: intermediate enemies, killable but requiring more care
- 5-6 Might: minibosses, difficult fights that will require resources to defeat

Bosses:

- 1-2 Might: An easy boss, dangerous but quickly destroyed
- 3-4 Might: A midlevel boss – killable if they are careful
- 5-6 Might: Endgame – expect multiple deaths

When rolling to attack, only dice that meet or exceed target's Might are considered successes.

Non-boss enemies are commonly found throughout the dungeon, and while they might be unique, they do not on their own pose a significant danger to the Party. An enemy has:

- 10 Health per Might
- 10 Stamina

Bosses are the big, solo enemies that lie at crucial points of the dungeon. They are much tougher than normal enemies and have:

- 15 Health per Might
- 10+Might Stamina
- Fury

Phase Shifts

As the fight progresses, bosses will change, degrade, or gain a second wind. We call these moments Phase Shifts. Depending on the might of the boss, they will have more Phase Shifts:

- Might 1-2: 1 Phase Shift
- Might 3-4: 1 or 2 Phase Shifts
- Might 5-6: 2 Phase Shifts

Place the Phase Shifts at dramatic moments in the fight, or when you think your friends have started to learn the boss's moves. You can initiate them when the boss hits a certain threshold of Health, but you don't have to. If you aren't sure when to do it, ask your friends when would feel right.

Some bosses deal more damage after a Phase Shift, and this is reflected in their description through the *Mighty* tag. If an enemy has an attack with a *Mighty* tag, it adds that number of damage to its attack without increasing the amount of Stamina that attack costs.



Example Enemies

Dungeon Scavenger

Desperate for resources and a way out.

Might: 2 | Health: 20 | Stamina: 10

Dagger: 2 Heft, Close

Innocent Explorer

In over their head and desperately afraid.

Might: 1 | Health: 10 | Stamina: 10

Undead Soldier

This was a soldier once, but no one knows for whom.

Might: 1 | Health: 10 | Stamina: 10

Sword: 3 Heft, Close

Undead Captain

This undead soldier carries slightly more rusted medals on their uniform than usual.

Might: 2 | Health: 20 | Stamina: 10

Halberd: 4 Heft, Reach

Red-Eye Knight

Two red beacons shine behind this knight's visor.

Might: 3 | Health: 30 | Stamina: 10

Greatsword: Heft 5, Close, Forceful

Red Resurgence: Heft 4, Magery, Healing, Lingering 1

Lizard Dog

Who created these creatures? Did they intend them to suffer so?

Might: 1 | Health: 10 | Stamina: 10

Claw: 2 Heft, Touch

Scaled Wolf

Its screams are almost human in their quality. They say the Old King bred them for war.

Might: 2 | Health: 20 | Stamina: 10

Claw: 4 Heft, Touch

Breath: 3 Heft, Subdual, Reach

Dragon Dire Wolf

A human face peeks out between its massive fangs. Its audible weeping does not cease.

Might: 4 | Health: 40 | Stamina: 10

Claw: 5 Heft, Close

Breath: 5 Heft, Subdual, Far, Area

Example Bosses

Chained Marauder

This knight is draped in chains, wrists bound. They carry a sword on their back, but it is also chained and cannot be drawn.

Might: 4 | Health: 60 | Stamina: 14

Chained Hands: 4 Heft, Close

Chained Sword: 4 Heft, Close, Area

Phase Shift: Broken Manacles

The knight screams, and strains against their bonds. With a great snap, their Manacles give way and they adopt a more feral stance as they grip their weapon, blade still sealed.

Statistics as above, but replace the attacks with:

Unchained Sword: 4 Heft, Reach, Area, Mighty 4

Loping Spin: 4 Heft, Reach, Area, Mighty 4, Forceful

Chrysilla, Dracocanid Queen

A massive dragon dire wolf and the Old King's personal pet. She followed him wherever he went, even after his death.

Might: 3 | Health: 45 | Stamina: 13

Claws: 10 Heft, Close

Silk: 2 Heft, Subdual, Far

Phase Shift: The Queen's Waltz

A porcelain white human torso crawls its way from out of the Queen's throat and straightens itself gracefully. Instead of hands, it has claws. Instead of a mouth, jaws. Even still, she is weeping.

Statistics as above, but replace the attacks with:

Claws: 2 Heft, Close, Mighty 2

Breath: 2 Heft, Subdual, Far, Area

The Old King

A towering undead colossus. Was he like this before death, or was this done to him?

Might: 5 | Health: 75 | Stamina: 15

Fists: 5 Heft, Reach, Messy

Body Slam: 30 Heft, Far, Area

Phase Shift: Dissolution

The Old King's arms falls off to the ground and now fight on their own, separate from his body.

Statistics as above, but lose the Fists attack.

Two new enemies appear:

Might 1 | Health: 15 | Stamina: 11

Fists: 5 Heft, Close, Messy

Phase Shift: The Crown

The Old King's head falls to the ground to fight on its own, separate from his body.

Statistics as above.

A new enemy appears:

Might 2 | Health: 30 | Stamina 12

Imperious Gaze: 6 Heft, Subdual, Far

Terms Catalogue

Attack: the action of attacking, with a weapon, your body, a spell, or some other means.

Block: the action of guarding yourself, using a shield or your body, to stop an incoming attack.

Dodge: the action of ducking, weaving, or rolling with the intent to avoid incoming danger.

Drain: the “soul-weight” of a spell, representing how much Focus it costs to cast, the Stamina it takes to use it, how many dice you roll to use it, and how much damage (or healing) it does.

Focus: your long term energy and ability to maintain concentration. You have 10, and you regain 1 Focus for every 2 damage you deal (by any means).

Focus Tag: a tag surrounded by [brackets] can only be applied by spending 2 Focus.

Gift: a benefit chosen at character creation that grants a permanent passive effect.

Goad: the action of taunting an enemy or otherwise drawing their attention. A goaded enemy makes you a priority with attacks, opening them up to other party members’ attacks.

Grade: the sturdiness, sharpness, and general condition of your weapon. Grade deteriorates as an optional consequence of missing attacks, and can also be affected by hitting enemies with certain qualities. During the Exploration Phase, Grade can also be

reduced by environmental effects and can be restored by taking maintenance actions.

Guard: the stability of an equipped shield. Higher quality shields have a higher Guard, and thus are more effective. When Blocking, incoming damage is reduced by your shield's Guard, with any remaining damage applied to Stamina rather than Health.

Heft: the weight, bulkiness, and general mass of a weapon. Heft determines how much Stamina an Attack or Dodge action costs, how many dice are rolled as part of an Attack, and how much damage is dealt on a successful Attack.

Linked Tags: tags that are connected [like]+[this] are always applied together, at the Focus cost of a single tag.

Load: Your Load is the heaviness of the items you are carrying. Your Load is equal to the sum of the Hefts of all your gear (treat items without a Heft rating as having 1 Heft for the purposes of Load). If your Load is higher than your Stamina, take the difference as a penalty to Stamina during the combat and Exploration Phases.

Might: a measure of an enemy's size, strength, and power. When rolling to attack an enemy, the attack hits if the highest number rolled meets or exceeds the target's Might.

Miss: this is what happens when you fail to land a hit when making an Attack action. When you miss, you either take Heft as a penalty to your starting Stamina on the next round or take reduce your weapon's Grade by 1.

Overextension: a penalty to Stamina received by missing an attack or by taking an action that costs more Stamina than you have left. In the former case, the penalty is equal to the weapon's

Heft. In the latter case, the penalty is equal to the difference between the Stamina cost of the action and the amount of Stamina you had when you took that action.

Round: the space of time during the Combat Phase wherein all involved characters choose and resolve their actions.

Success: a die rolled as part of an Attack action that meets or exceeds the target's Might.

Staggered: a character who starts a round with zero Stamina is staggered, and thus cannot defend themselves or attack.

Stamina: your short term energy during a fight or while exploring. In the Combat Phase, it's used to Attack, Block, and Dodge. In the Exploration Phase, it's used to Scout, Salvage, and Avoid Danger. If you would start a round with 0 Stamina, you are Staggered.

Appendix I: Killing the Record Keeper

So you want to kill the Record Keeper. There are three ways:

Rotating the Role

When you Scout, one person volunteers to play the Threats in the room. Everyone should read the Record Keeping section together to understand how to play Threats.

Dispersing the Role

When you Scout, everyone develops and plays the Threats together. When someone makes a response to a Threat or its Moves, another player says whether it works and what the Threat does, and then asks a third player what they do. Everyone should read the Record Keeping section together to understand how to play Threats.

Killing the Threats

There are no Threats in the dungeon. When you Scout in a room, relate it to your histories, your desires, and your conflicts. Continue play as normal.

Remember: no one is the master of the dungeon.

Appendix II: Killing the Dungeon

Things don't have to be this way. The world doesn't have to forget. If its walls won't keep the memories in, then you can be there to hold your hands over the cracks. And you won't be alone.

You aren't the only one in this world looking for meaning. You aren't the only one who is afraid of the slow march of time that steals everything you love and everything you know.

Torches of memory's ire can be shared by more than one hand. You don't have to hold it all yourself. When you share your memories, when you drink deep from the dungeon's memories and from each other, what wondrous things will you see? What stories will you have lived?

The secret that the dungeon doesn't want you to know is that your life doesn't have to be endless struggle in a losing battle; it doesn't have to be flailing below the water desperate for air; it doesn't have to be like this. Any of us by ourselves could never scratch the dungeon,

but perhaps together, we can destroy this motherfucker. Do you want to try?

