**PBEMGS Dungeon Crawler - Design Document (In-Progress)**

## ****Overview****

The PBEMGS Dungeon Crawler is an asynchronous, play-by-email fantasy RPG incorporating **deckbuilding mechanics** and **automated combat**. Players control a **single character** with potential support units (summons, pets, mercenaries, etc.), exploring dungeons, building their deck, and competing on a **PvE leaderboard**. Progress is **stamina-limited**, ensuring fair play across users.

## ****Core Mechanics****

### ****Deckbuilding****

* The player's **deck evolves over time**, acquiring new cards via **talents, loot drops, and purchases**.
* Decks can be modified **outside of combat** but **not during combat**.
* Minimum deck size required; a maximum deck size is under consideration.
* Fatigue mechanics (losing upon running out of cards) are uncertain; reshuffling may be the default.
* Hybrid multi-class abilities require **cross-specialization** (similar to multicolor MTG cards).
* Some **general synergy abilities** allow effects to apply universally (e.g., "Enhance Weapon: Fire" applies to all weapon types).

### ****Combat****

* **Fully automated**, **deterministic** combat with some probabilistic effects (e.g., status effects, critical hits).
* Players can modify their deck between encounters within constraints (level/class/talents/weapon/etc.).
* Potential for **pre-combat "stances"**, such as auto-fleeing at low HP.
* RNG primarily comes from **card draw order**, ensuring strategic deckbuilding.
* Concept of range? Melee/mid-range/long-range, cards to decrease (Charge), cards to increase (Disengage, Blink). Automatic movement if wrong range – i.e. Warrior flips “Melee” when all targets are at medium-range, the melee card moves him to close range instead of doing damage? Maybe a bit too complex, would have to think about this some.
* Groups can have multiple units – packs of wolves/goblins etc on the mob side, player side can have summons/pets/hirelings. Opens up AoE effects (damage, buffs, status, etc).
* Some cards are “cantrips” – a minor effect that allows another immediate action. A second consecutive cantrip doesn’t cycle though. Balance deck size vs extra utility – penalty for needing to reshuffle?

### ****Character Progression****

* **Traditional XP-based leveling** with skill trees.
* **Extremely open talent trees** allow players to specialize deeply or spread across multiple class archetypes.
* **Multi-classing unlocks hybrid abilities**, combining class mechanics (e.g., a Warrior + Elementalist can become a Spellblade).
* Staying in a **single class grants synergy bonuses**, making mono-class builds viable alongside hybrid ones.

### ****Support Units****

* Each unit (enemy or ally) **operates independently with its own deck**.
* Some units may provide **group-wide buffs** (e.g., a Hobgoblin leader boosting goblins).
* Customization varies: **Necromancers may not modify skeletons, but Beastmasters can customize pets**.

### ****Dungeon Structure****

* **Linear, floor-based progression** (similar to Slay the Spire).
* Possible **multiple dungeon settings** (e.g., beginner dungeon, late-game demon castle).
* Stamina-based progression forces **decision-making on exploration, rest, and actions**.

### ****Leaderboard****

* Based on **dungeon progress**.
* Encourages competitive PvE without direct PvP.

### ****Stamina System****

* Stamina is used for core actions:
  + **Exploring floors**
  + **Resting/camping to recover HP**
  + **Out-of-combat talent usage** (e.g., summoning skeletons, healing self/allies, scouting, pre-laying traps)
* Non-stamina actions (e.g., shopping) remain free.
* **Daily reset** ensures fair progress between players.

## ****Class System****

Each base class has **three distinct talent trees** and gains synergy bonuses for staying within their specialization. This synergy is TBD – ideas here include:

- Stats (STR/DEX/INT/WIS/SPD) given by talents. i.e. Warrior talents would give STR, and some cards and/or equipment require minimum stat levels. Pure warriors could then equip the heaviest armor, Paladins (Warrior/priest) a bit less, Melee beastmaster less than that, etc.

- deckbuilding limitiations – mage-types can only have X amount of mana total (arcane power?) in their deck (each spellcast card with a “mana cost”) – mana limit given by deep-tree talents and/or INT. Could do something similar with Priest (divine power?).

- cross-tree synergies (Beastmaster Aspect of the Pack (wild shaman) increasing stats of self and beast-type allies, which are on the other two trees).

Classes should also have distinct weaknesses to provide push-pull for single-classing vs multi-classing. More than 2 is possible as well, though the “cost of entry” for starting a new talent tree should be pretty steep because of the flexibility, and strong utility needs to be … not at the “splash” level.

### ****1. Warrior**** (Melee Tank & Damage Dealer)

* **Weapon Mastery** – Attack/weapon specialization.
* **Protection** – Shield-based tanking, damage reduction, counterattacks.
* **Berserker (?)** – High-risk, high-reward, rage-based offense.
* Class Resource: STR stat, allows equipment usage.
* Class Strengths/Attributes: No external deckbuilding limitations – can use all cards received as long as they have enough STR. Very high durability.
* **In-Class Synergy**: Higher stats from all talents.
* **Weakness**: No ranged/magic options. Weak to status effects. Mostly single-target. Slow.

### ****2. Wizard**** (Magic Damage & Control)

* **Evocation** – Fire, Ice, and Lightning magic, focused on raw damage and AoE.
* **Enhancement** – Utility magic, mana efficiency, protection spells, buffs/debuffs.
* **Conjuration** – Calls forth arcane constructs or elemental creatures.
* Class Resource – Arcane Power: Deck has an upper Arcane Power limitation.
* Class Strengths/Attributes: Elemental damage has additional effects (fire: burn DoT, ice: slow, etc). Long range (if range is in the system). Lots of AoE.
* In-Class Synergy: AP limit, elemental mastery talents.
* **Weakness**: Fragile, weak against disruption.

### ****3. Priest**** (Healing & Leadership)

* **Sanctity** – Strong healing and support buffs.
* **Devotion** – Gather allies, Auras/group buffs.
* **Invocation** – temporary summons, possibly debuffs/curses.
* Class Resource – Divine Power: Deck has an upper Divine Power limitation.
* Class Strengths/Attributes: Enhances allies, can gather multiple allies to create a traditional party. Debuff prevention and removal.
* **Class Synergy Bonus**: DP limit. Multiple allies can fulfill multiple roles while not affecting the character’s build.
* **Weakness**: Lacks both survivability and DPS alone – completely reliant on allies.

### ****4. Rogue**** (Stealth & Burst Damage)

* **Assassin** – High burst damage, poisons, crit-heavy attacks.
* **Trapper** – Tactical battlefield control, traps.
* **Ninjitsu** – Stealth, illusions, teleporting combat, ranged.
* Class Resource: Focus – “combo-point” style – builders/finishers.
* Class Strengths/Attributes: Can end fights before they start. DoT damage. RNG damage prevention (fade/dodge/illusion). Traps allows weakening opponents with no risk. Very fast. Lots of cantrips.
* **In-Class Synergy**: Focus points across all 3 trees in common.
* **Weakness**: Squishy. RNG damage prevention can fail. Bad vs large groups and thick opponents.

### ****5. Ranger**** (Ranged Combat & Scouting)

* **Marksman** – Precision-based ranged attacks.
* **Survivalist** – Traps, tactical movement, environment-based skills (cover).
* **Pathfinder** – Provides information on upcoming encounters, allowing deck adjustments. Specialist “hunting” talents (Beast Hunter, Demon Hunter, etc).
* Class Resource: AGL stat, allows equipment usage.
* Class Strengths: Range. Encounter preview is very strong. Consistent performance (high accuracy), low variation. Quite fast.
* **In-Class Synergy**: Variety of attack types, good customization.
* **Weakness**: Vulnerable in melee combat, lower pure DPS.

### ****6. Beastmaster**** (Summoning & Shapeshifting)

* **Beast Companion** – Specializes in bonding with a powerful creature.
* **Pack Leader** – Controls multiple weaker/temporary summons. Group buffs.
* **Shapeshifting** – Transform into beasts, enhance own stats/abilities.
* Class resource: Spirit – used when revealing cards (very weak/no effect if none left). Regenerates slowing during combat, or much faster in between. Shapeshift form has a per-turn cost.
* Class Strengths/Attributes: Very flexible combat style – single large creatures or a pack of small ones both available. Melee or ranged. Strong survivability.
* **In-Class Synergy**: Higher Spirit, beast synergy (skills from beasts affecting beasts).
* **Weakness**: Loses effectiveness if summons are neutralized, maybe can’t call strong pets out of nothing, have to be a correct environment/encounter, or very stamina-heavy to replace main pet (resurrection ritual). Weaker physical combat without shapeshifting. Relatively slow (but the beasts probably aren’t!)

## ****Character Traits (proposed):****

**- Name: PBEMGS user-handle (?) – one char at a time, maybe with a sequence number (roman numerals?) Jabari\_I, Jabari\_II for id in leaderboards.**

**- Progression: XP, Level, stamina remaning, currency, current location.**

**- Current deck**

**- Card Inventory**

**- Talents: Selected talents (inc. levels if done that way – i.e. “Enchant Weapon Fire I – III”).**

**- Stats: The usual stats: STR, DEX, INT, WIS, SPD. Deckbuilding maximums if separate from stats (arcane power, divine power, others?) Some kind of control on allies/mercs? (Charisma – how gained? “Leadership” talents?**

**- Equipment: Weapon, Armor, 2-3 Accessories (neck, wrist, helm)? Keep it simple. Weapons can have +talents, +stats, elemental properties, etc. Accessories can have stats, +talents, shielding, etc.**

## ****Next Steps****

1. **Refine Deck Construction Limits** – Min/max deck size, fatigue mechanics.
2. **Expand Talent Trees** – Flesh out specific ability interactions within classes.
3. **Support Unit Rules** – How much control customization applies per class.
4. **Dungeon Variants** – Different biome/difficulty settings.
5. **Balance Multi-Classing vs. Mono-Class** – Ensure neither is objectively superior.

This document will continue to evolve as the game design progresses.

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| **Wizard / Priest** | | **Arcane Power / Divine Power** | | | | | | Each talent tree increases the max available pool. **Limits number of high-cost spells** a multi-class can use. |
| **Warrior / Ranger** | | | | **Stat-Based Gear & Attacks** | Stronger weapons & armor require STR/DEX. A dual-class **won’t meet the STR/DEX caps for the best stuff** unless they invest heavily. | | | |
| **Rogue** | **Stat-Based for Gear, Soft Limit for Skills?** | | | | | | Could follow Warrior (STR for heavy weapons) **OR** a DEX-based “Skill Limit” where high-tier Rogue moves require investment. | |
| **Beastmaster** | | | **Spirit (Running Energy vs. Deck Limit)** | | | Instead of a **deckbuilding cap**, BM has a **Spirit pool that regenerates**. Multi-classing with BM means **you can include BM cards, but you can’t afford to activate too many.** | | |

## ****Monster Types and attributes: (just to keep notes as I think of them!)****

****Beast: tend to travel in packs, synergy with each other.****