

RULE BOOK



EARLY ACCESS

This is an early access release of the digital board game "Soulless Vessel" for Tabletop Simulator. It's a work in progress, but our goal is to deliver a great experience.

To ensure it's the best game it can be, we will periodically make changes to improve balance and presentation.

The campaign's first chapter can be enjoyed in its entirety today, and more chapters will follow over the coming months.

We want this game to grow together with an engaged community, so we encourage all our players to leave feedback, and you can do that by joining us on [Discord](#).

If you'd like to support us, you may also [consider subscribing to our Patreon](#) for in-depth updates and a voice in the direction of future updates. Your support helps us pay for the art which makes this a complete and polished product.

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| | | | |
|-------------------------------------|----|--------------------------|----|
| Game Summary & Goal | 5 | Difficult Terrain | 11 |
| Game & Campaign Overview | 5 | Special Movement Actions | 11 |
| Game Components | 6 | Attacks Of Opportunity | 12 |
| Ability Cards | 6 | Dice Types | 13 |
| Ability Tokens | 6 | Dice Symbols | 13 |
| Vessels | 6 | Power | 13 |
| Items | 6 | Plus | 13 |
| Wear Tokens | 6 | Double Plus | 13 |
| Special Tokens | 6 | Star | 13 |
| Book Of Adventures | 7 | Wear | 14 |
| Book Of Exploration | 7 | Botch | 14 |
| Exploration Cards | 7 | Critical | 14 |
| Map Tiles | 7 | Dice Rolls | 14 |
| Player Board | 8 | Attack Roll | 14 |
| Die Pool Tokens | 8 | Defense Roll | 14 |
| Scratch Tokens | 8 | Spellcasting Roll | 14 |
| Hero Wound Tokens | 8 | Damage Roll | 15 |
| Status Effect Cards | 8 | Miscellaneous Rolls | 15 |
| Initiative Tracker | 8 | Attacking | 15 |
| Player Tokens | 8 | Unarmed Attacks | 15 |
| Enemy Cards | 9 | Line-of-Sight | 15 |
| AI Cards | 9 | Ability Cards | 16 |
| Trait Cards | 9 | Cooldown | 16 |
| Enemy Standees | 9 | Failed Spellcasting | 17 |
| Status Effect Tokens | 9 | Ongoing Effects | 17 |
| Enemy Wound / Minion Scratch Tokens | 9 | Interrupt Effects | 17 |
| Coins | 10 | Ability Tokens | 17 |
| Soul Shards | 10 | Initiative | 17 |
| Legend Points | 10 | Items & Item Slots | 18 |
| Game Concepts | 11 | Vessels | 18 |
| Movement | 11 | Exchanging Vessels | 18 |
| Movement Actions | 11 | Damage & Death | 18 |
| Red Map Lines | 11 | Hero Damage | 19 |
| Blue Map Lines | 11 | Wound & Scratch Healing | 19 |

| | | | |
|--------------------------------|----|-----------------------------------|----|
| Enemy Damage | 20 | Secret Plans | 27 |
| Minion Damage | 20 | 5. Reveal Cards & Hero Initiative | 27 |
| Status Effects | 20 | 6. Turns | 27 |
| Bleed | 20 | Hero Turn | 27 |
| Cripple | 20 | Movement | 27 |
| Dazed | 21 | Ability Cards & Actions | 27 |
| Stun | 21 | Minion Turn | 27 |
| Weaken | 21 | Enemy Turn | 28 |
| Cursed | 21 | Enemy Card | 28 |
| Terror | 21 | Activation Order | 28 |
| Exploration | 21 | Target Priority | 28 |
| Quest Triggers | 21 | Movement | 28 |
| Connecting Rooms | 21 | Attacks & Defense | 29 |
| Placing Loot & DOors | 22 | Abilities | 29 |
| Placing Enemies | 22 | AI Modifiers | 29 |
| Key Terms | 22 | Threat Value | 29 |
| Nimble | 22 | End Turn Effects | 29 |
| Slippery | 22 | End Round | 29 |
| Bulky | 22 | First Game Setup | 30 |
| Knockback | 23 | Select Roles | 30 |
| Pull | 23 | Select Starting Decks | 30 |
| Retreat | 23 | Select Vessels | 30 |
| Hit Multiple / Additional | 24 | Select Items | 30 |
| Reach | 24 | Deck Builder | 31 |
| Toughness | 24 | Select Soul Tokens | 31 |
| Straight / Diagonal Line | 24 | Select Difficulty | 31 |
| Blast Template | 25 | Default | 31 |
| Giving Up | 25 | Challenger | 31 |
| Rule Of Ambiguity | 25 | Nightmare | 31 |
| Game Rounds | 26 | +1 Mode | 31 |
| 1. Reduce Ongoing Effects | 26 | Prepare First Adventure | 31 |
| 2. Events | 26 | Adventure Setup | 32 |
| 3. AI Cards & Enemy Initiative | 26 | Exploration Deck | 32 |
| 4. Place Ability Cards | 26 | Enemy Deck | 32 |

| | | | |
|------------------------------|----|--------------------------|----|
| Events | 32 | 2-Player Campaign | 36 |
| First Room | 32 | Tabletop Simulator Guide | 37 |
| Story Intro | 32 | Take A Seat | 37 |
| Quest Triggers | 32 | Shuffle | 37 |
| After The Adventure | 32 | Flip | 37 |
| Town Phase | 33 | Draw Card vs. Move Deck | 37 |
| Shared Currencies | 33 | View Card | 37 |
| Repair | 33 | Lock / Unlock Object | 37 |
| Sell Items | 33 | Draw Line-Of-Sight | 37 |
| Buy Items | 33 | Look at Facedown Cards | 37 |
| Additional Inventory | 33 | Quick Draw Card | 37 |
| Tier 0 - Improvised Items | 33 | Rotate Object | 37 |
| The Soul Shop | 33 | Ping | 37 |
| Immediate Use Items | 33 | Take Multiple From Bag | 38 |
| Vessel Offers | 33 | Dice Roller Tool | 38 |
| Buy & Upgrade Ability Cards | 34 | End Round Button | 38 |
| Buying Ability Cards | 34 | End Of The Rule Book | 38 |
| Upgrading Ability Cards | 34 | | |
| Retraining Cards | 34 | | |
| Vessel Perk Unlocks | 34 | | |
| Retaining Synchronization | 34 | | |
| Select Next Adventure | 34 | | |
| Adventure Tracker | 34 | | |
| Campaign & Tiers | 35 | | |
| Advancing Tiers | 35 | | |
| The First Tier | 35 | | |
| The Final Tier | 35 | | |
| Failing The Campaign | 35 | | |
| Optional Game Rules | 36 | | |
| Difficulty: At Death's Door | 36 | | |
| Difficulty: Neverwake Horde | 36 | | |
| Difficulty: Starved Economy | 36 | | |
| Difficulty: Smart & Mean | 36 | | |
| Singleplayer / Solo Campaign | 36 | | |

GAME SUMMARY & GOAL

Soulless Vessel is a **cooperative dungeon crawler** all about tactics and building a strong character with powerful internal and party synergies.

Each player assumes the role of a hero's lost soul returned to fight an age-old evil once more: the Neverwake Dragon.

Equipped with the power to inhabit a vessel - the body of a former hero - the players will pursue the Neverwake Dragon's tracks and grow strong enough to ultimately face and defeat it.

As they adventure, the heroes will grow stronger by gaining and improving their equipment and skills, and by acquiring new and powerful vessels for their souls to inhabit.

The campaign is divided into adventures, each of which is designed to be played in a single game session, and during each adventure the party will coordinate to fulfill quest objectives while exploring a procedurally generated dungeon inhabited by enemies that act based on clear rules the players can learn and strategize around.

GAME & CAMPAIGN OVERVIEW

Recommended Players: 3-5

Supported Players: 1-5

Adventure Length: 45 minutes per player

Town Phase Length: 15-30 minutes

Sessions (full campaign): 15

GAME COMPONENTS

There are several types of game components players should be familiar with and this section provides an overview over all of them:

ABILITY CARDS



Ability cards are a player's arsenal of actions and represent the heroic soul's unique powers. Each player builds their own deck of ability cards which remain with them even as they change vessels.

Players start the game with six un-upgraded ability cards of their choice, and alternatively there are fifteen pre-made starter decks that new players can choose for a quick and easy start.

ABILITY TOKENS



Ability tokens are used to track the location of an ongoing ability effect on the board, and are always placed in a specific square on the game board.

VESSELS



Vessels are the physical bodies a heroic soul inhabits to give their power form in the physical world. Each vessel is represented with a card and a

standee miniature, and provides unique benefits that grow stronger over time as the party's legend grows.

At any given time a player inhabits only a single vessel, and when they leave it for another the abandoned vessel crumbles to dust and is lost.

ITEMS



Items can be equipped to provide useful bonuses and options which enhance the synergy of a player's overall character build. They can be found during adventures or purchased in shops between them.

Players can carry and equip a limited number of items of various types, as shown on the player board (see "[Player Board](#)").

WEAR TOKENS



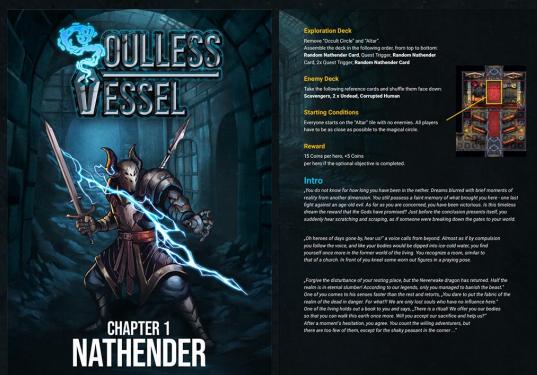
'Wear' tokens are placed on an item card whenever it suffers wear, and an item breaks if it accumulates a certain amount of these tokens.

SPECIAL TOKENS



The special token marks anything that doesn't have a token of its own: activated spending options on ongoing effects, taunted enemies, or the ability tokens of vessels like the Monk, for example.

BOOK OF ADVENTURES



This guide contains all the adventures, including story, setup instructions, objectives, special rules, layout, an event table, and rewards.

This is your main point of reference for the particulars of any given adventure.

BOOK OF EXPLORATION



Whenever a new map tile is added to the board, the players will roll a die and consult the book of exploration to determine the new room's arrangement and contents.

This manual describes how to set up the room with enemies, treasures, vessels, as well as its orientation and available doors.

EXPLORATION CARDS



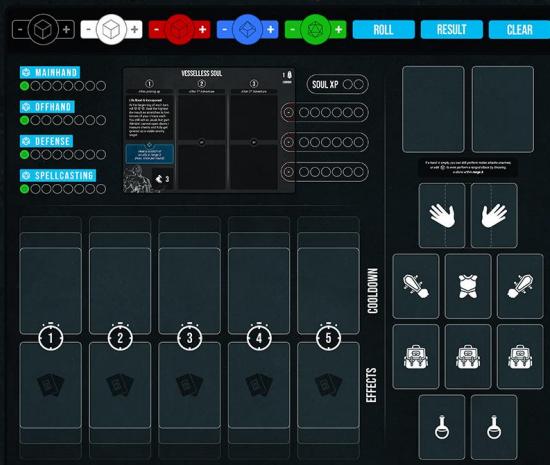
Exploration cards determine what room is found when opening doors in the dungeon. The book of adventures contains instructions on assembling the exploration card deck for each adventure.

MAP TILES



Each time a door is opened, a new map tile is added to the dungeon based on the exploration card drawn and the rules for the adventure (see "**Connecting Rooms**").

PLAYER BOARD



Each hero, and therefore player, has their own player board to record the vessel they currently possess, what items they have, but also to track the status of their ability cards and their vessel's health.

The player board is also used to manage the inventory of items (see “[Items & Item Slots](#)”).

DIE POOL TOKENS



Die pool tokens are placed on the player board to provide a quick reference for the dice to be rolled in various common dice pools (main hand attack, defense etc.).

The “[Dice Roller Tool](#)” also uses them to determine how many dice to create.

SCRATCH TOKENS



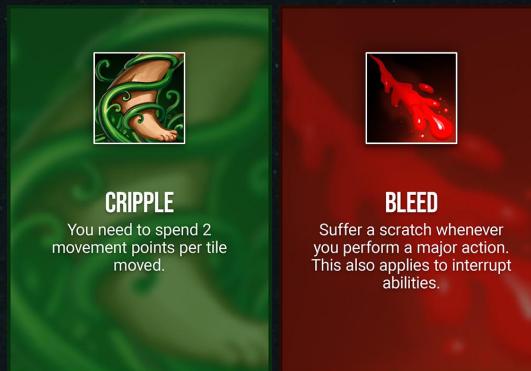
Scratch tokens are used to track smaller injuries on the player board. They can be flipped with the “F” key, and the red side indicates a scratch suffered.

HERO WOUND TOKENS



Hero wound tokens mark severe injuries by heroes, and block an entire row of scratches after scratches have overflowed into the next row.

STATUS EFFECT CARDS



Status effect cards are placed on the duration track to track ongoing effects suffered by a player.

INITIATIVE TRACKER



The initiative tracker is used each game round to determine the activation order of heroes, minions and enemy groups.

It also has slots you can use to organize enemy, AI and trait cards.

PLAYER TOKENS



Every player selects a soul token to represent them on the initiative tracker when the campaign starts.

ENEMY CARDS



Each type of enemy is described by a corresponding enemy card, which contains information about that creature's combat-relevant attributes and their special abilities.

Each enemy card comes in two variants, one for normal and one for nightmare difficulty.

A single enemy card usually represents a group of enemy models on the game board.

AI CARDS



AI

AI cards describe how enemy groups act, and determine which modifiers or abilities are active on them each round. Each group of enemies gets a new AI card each round (see "AI Cards").

TRAIT CARDS



TRAITS

Some circumstances may call for a trait card to be attached to an enemy group. Trait cards provide an enemy group with unique bonuses or abilities, making them more challenging to fight.

ENEMY STANDEES



Each enemy in an enemy group is represented on the game board by a standee, and each of them will move and act independently, as dictated by the corresponding enemy, AI, and trait cards.

STATUS EFFECT TOKENS



Status effect tokens are placed next to a standee to track ongoing effects on an enemy. There are several types, one for each different status.

ENEMY WOUND / MINION SCRATCH TOKENS



Enemy wound tokens are used to track wounds suffered by a particular enemy, and are placed on the board next to the wounded model.

Use the same tokens to track scratches for minions.

ADVENTURE TRACKER



The adventure tracker is used throughout the campaign to track which adventures the party has completed, and at what point they move to the next campaign chapter (see “[Campaign & Tiers](#)”).

There is a token representing each adventure, and after finishing it (successful or not), its token is placed on the adventure tracker.

COINS



Coins can be found in treasure chests, earned as rewards, or acquired by selling items. The party shares its coins, and they can be used to purchase and repair items, gain access to more inventory in the shops, and exchange ability cards for new ones.

SOUL SHARDS



Soul shards are obtained as adventure rewards or by extracting a vessel which no soul chooses to inhabit. They can be spent in the Soul Shop, which becomes available starting in chapter two.

LEGEND POINTS



Legend Points reflect the party's growing legend and renown. They are gained by successfully finishing adventures.

The party can spend them to unlock the various perks of their vessels.

GAME CONCEPTS

MOVEMENT

The map tiles which make up the game board are divided into **squares** through dark grid lines.

All models can move on the game board by spending movement points.

For each movement point spent, a model can move onto an adjacent square, straight or diagonally.

A model cannot move onto or through a square that is already occupied by another model however.

MOVEMENT ACTIONS

During each player's turn, they gain movement points equal to their vessel's speed which have to be used before taking any other action.

Ability cards, items, or other effects may grant additional movement actions, which provide a particular number of movement points, and may also grant the movement taken special qualities such as "nimble" or "slippery".

Each of these is a movement action, and must be completed in its entirety before moving on to other actions. At the end of each action, any unspent movement points are lost.

RED MAP LINES



Some map tiles show red solid lines along the edges of one or more squares, representing walls or other permanent barriers.

These red lines cannot be crossed, and it is not possible to draw a "**Line-Of-Sight**" through them.

BLUE MAP LINES



Some map tiles show blue dotted lines along the edges of one or more squares, representing barriers like fences, screens, windows etc..

These blue dotted lines block movement, but don't block "**Line-Of-Sight**".

DIFFICULT TERRAIN



Dark diagonal lines that cover an entire square mark "Difficult Terrain". To move onto such a tile, a model needs to spend double the normal amount of movement points.

Note however that this does **not** stack with the negative effect "**Cripple**".

SPECIAL MOVEMENT ACTIONS

Heroes can spend movement points for more than just moving. A variety of miscellaneous actions can be performed during movement by spending movement points.

Open Door (1 Movement): A hero who is adjacent to a closed door can spend one movement point to open it. Remove the door and reveal the next room (see "**Exploration**").

Pick Up Treasure (1 Movement): A hero who is adjacent to a treasure chest can spend one movement point to open it. Remove the treasure chest and draw two random item cards from the pile of available item cards. The opening hero may move both items to their unoccupied and compatible item slots on their player board.

If they cannot hold one or both of the items, place a dropped item token where the treasure chest was, and put the item card(s) near the map tile.



(a "Dropped Item" token)

It can be picked up by other heroes following the same rules as if it were in a chest (except that you don't draw items from the pile of item cards).

(Un)Equip Item (1 Movement): By spending one movement point, the hero can move any amount of items around within their own player board's inventory, e.g., to move one weapon to their backpack and a weapon from their backpack to their hand slot.

Exchange Item (1 Movement): A hero who is adjacent to another hero may give or take one item to or from the targeted hero's player board by spending one movement point. Both heroes may perform the "(Un)Equip Item" action for free after exchanging items.

Use Consumable (1 Movement): By spending one movement point, a hero may use one of their items of the consumable type. Handle the effects of the item, then discard it.

Assume Vessel (2 Movement): By spending two movement points, a hero who is adjacent to a vessel token can assume the corresponding vessel (see "**Vessels**").

Drain Vessel (2 Movement): A hero adjacent to a vessel token can spend two movement points to remove the vessel and drain soul shards from it which can later be spent in the "**Soul Shop**". The amount of soul shards gained depends on the rarity of the vessel:

- Common: 1 Soul Shard
- Rare: 2 Soul Shards
- Legendary: 3 Soul Shards

ATTACKS OF OPPORTUNITY

Whenever a hero or minion **begins** a new movement action and moves at least one square (regardless of direction) while adjacent to one or more enemy models, they must perform an escape test.

The affected **character rolls one cursed die**. The number shown indicates how many enemies would immediately perform a free attack of opportunity against them: If a -1 is rolled, one enemy model will attack. On a -2, two different ones will attack if there are two enemies to do so.

Handle these attacks as usual. If there are multiple enemies adjacent to the character, the ones with the highest attack value will perform the attack.

After these attacks are handled, the character can continue with their movement.

Example:



The hero wants to move two squares back. As they are adjacent to enemies as their movement begins, they roll one black Cursed Die.

It shows a "-1", so one of the two Corrupted Humans will immediately attack before the hero gets to move.

DICE TYPES

There are five types of dice in Soulless Vessel featuring various symbols in various combinations. Some dice also have blank sides that contribute nothing when rolled.

There is a limited supply of each type of die: if a hero would have more dice of a certain type than what is available, the surplus dice are simply lost.

| Die Type | Supply Limit | Description |
|-------------|--|--|
| Standard |  (4) | The standard die is a green twenty-sided die with the greatest variation of different symbols (good and bad). Heroes always have one standard die as a baseline for each attack, defense, or spellcasting roll and add any other bonus dice to it. |
| Power |  (3) | The power die is a red, six-sided die with the highest amount of available "Power". |
| Enhancement |  (4) | The enhancement die is a blue ten-sided die that has a great chance to add special symbols like the "Plus". |
| Blessing |  (5) | The blessing die is a white six-sided die that has a chance to add mild positive effects to a roll. |
| Cursed |  (5) | The cursed die is a black six-sided die that has a chance to subtract "Power" from a roll and is often the result of weaker attacks or other disadvantages. |

DICE SYMBOLS

In total, there are six different symbols that appear on dice in Soulless Vessel:

POWER

Power is shown as a number on the die. When you roll power, you simply add up all power values that are shown from the entire roll (subtracting the negative power from Cursed Dice). The result is the total power of the roll.

In many cases, you may activate other symbols to add even more power.

During attacks, power determines the total damage dealt to an enemy. During defense, it determines how much of the incoming damage is mitigated. During spellcasting rolls, power determines if the target number was met and consequently, if the spell succeeds.

PLUS



The plus symbol can be used to activate additional effects for the roll called "**spending options**".

Each 'plus' you roll can only be spent on one spending option, and each spending option can only be used once per roll.

Every vessel comes with one generic plus spending option that can be used on **any** of the three main types of rolls: attack, defense or spellcasting. See the example below:



If the order of your spending options matters, you can choose to activate them in any order you prefer.

Note that not all spending options are available on every roll (some can only be used during attack, defense or spellcasting roll).

DOUBLE PLUS



Some dice show a double plus, which is equivalent to having rolled two individual plus symbols.

You may also spend two individual plusses to activate spending options which cost a double plus.

STAR



The star is a rare symbol that can be used for spending options just like the plus symbol. It is generally used for more powerful effects.

If you don't need or want a star, you can always convert it into a plus symbol if desired!

WEAR



The 'wear' symbol indicates damage to one of the items involved in the roll (any piece of equipment that provided at least one benefit to the roll like a bonus die or a spending option). Put a 'wear' token on any one of those items you choose:



If the item has as much wear as its durability (shown as symbols at the bottom of its card), then it breaks and has to be permanently discarded.

Wear can be repaired for a small number of coins during the town phase (see "[Repair](#)").

BOTCH



A botch symbol indicates that the entire roll is botched and therefore unsuccessful, regardless of what the other dice shows. This **only** applies to attack, defense or spellcasting rolls, not to damage or other miscellaneous rolls.

If a roll is botched, you cannot make use of any other symbols unless you have specific spending options or perks that let you ignore the botch.

CRITICAL



A critical symbol indicates exceptional success.

On an attack roll, each critical deals one wound to the enemy, regardless of their defense, in addition to the other outcomes of the roll.

On a defense roll, a critical negates the entire attack. The hero (or minion) won't take any scratches and doesn't suffer any other repercussions like negative status effects.

On a spellcasting attempt, a critical results in an automatic success for the spell, regardless of the required target number. Other symbols can still be spent as usual to enhance the spell's effects.

DICE ROLLS

The outcomes of a hero's actions are determined by rolling dice. The amount of available dice depends on the type of roll and what bonus dice the hero gets based on their abilities and equipment.

There are five types of dice rolls:

ATTACK ROLL

When a hero performs an attack against an enemy, they make an attack roll to determine how much damage they deal, and what kind of special effects they can activate (see "[Attacking](#)").

DEFENSE ROLL

When an enemy attacks a hero or a minion, the target of the attack performs a defense roll to reduce the amount of incoming damage they'll suffer (see "[Attacks & Defense](#)").

SPELLCASTING ROLL

When a hero attempts the major action of a spell, they need to succeed at a spellcasting roll to produce the effects of that spell.

Successfully casting a spell requires that the roll produces a total power equal to or greater than the spell's target number.

RAY OF HEALING

Spellcasting (2+)
Cast a ray over a straight range of 5.

(an ability asking for a spellcasting roll with a total power of two or more)

DAMAGE ROLL

When an ability calls for a damage roll **that is not an attack**, they roll the specified dice pool but count only the total “**Power**” and “**Criticals**” rolled, ignoring all other symbols.

Weapons usually do not provide their bonus dice to such damage rolls.

MISCELLANEOUS ROLLS

A few abilities call for rolling a set of specific dice and using the results in a specified way. When making a miscellaneous roll, no other bonuses are applied and only the specified dice are rolled.

Symbols rolled on a miscellaneous roll can only be used for the spending options or conditions specific to that roll, and can't be used for generic options such as a vessel's 'plus' ability.

ATTACKING

Whenever a hero or minion performs an attack, they will do so with a suitable weapon or their fists.

Exactly one weapon is chosen for each attack, and the player **only gains bonus dice and spending options from the weapon they chose**, not from any other weapons they may also have equipped.

Any action that simply says “Attack” can be performed as a ranged or melee attack, as the player prefers, assuming the hero has an appropriate weapon equipped.

If an ability card explicitly states “Ranged Attack” or “Melee Attack” however, then it needs to be used with a weapon of the appropriate type, or an unarmed attack as outlined below.

Melee attacks can always be performed against any adjacent enemy, positioned either straight or diagonal relative to the attacker.

Ranged attacks have a specified range in squares, which can be counted in any combination of

straight or diagonal steps, so long as a direct line of sight can be traced to the target as well (see below).

If a hero performs a **ranged attack** while adjacent to one or more enemies, **add two Cursed Dice** to their attack roll.

The total power of the attack roll determines the damage done to the target (see “**Damage & Death**”).

UNARMED ATTACKS

Heroes can always perform unarmed melee attacks with their regular pool - usually, this is a single Standard Die, even if they have no weapon.

If a hero has at least one free hand, they can also perform ranged attacks by **throwing rocks** with a range of 3 and a Cursed Die added to the roll.

LINE-OF-SIGHT

Whenever an ability or attack mentions “**range**”, **then this implicitly requires a viable line-of-sight from the source to the target!**

To measure a viable line-of-sight, **draw an imaginary line from the center of any square occupied by the source model to the center of any one square that is occupied by the target**.

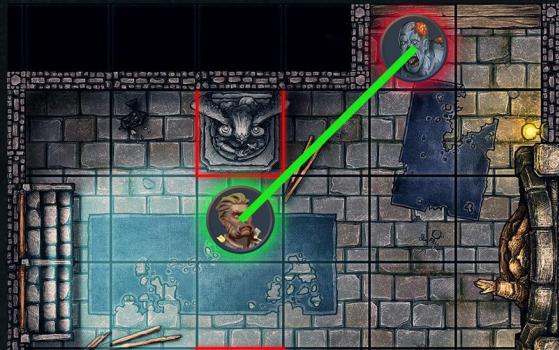
When “**Bulky**” models are involved, pick any of its four occupied tiles to draw from or to.

If that line crosses a red line or an outer wall of a tile, then the line-of-sight is blocked, but note that touching the corner of an obstruction is still valid.

Other models do not impact line-of-sight.



Example of a regular, viable line-of-sight.



Example of a viable line-of-sight touching the corner of an obstruction.



Example of a non-viable line-of-sight as it crosses two squares that are blocked.

ABILITY CARDS



Each ability card contains a variety of different key pieces of information, as outlined below:

1. **Card Type** - Provides a list of keywords which may be referenced by other cards.
2. **Initiative** - Specifies the card's initiative value, for determining activation order (see "[Initiative](#)").
3. **Card Name** - A deck may have only one card with the same name (including its upgraded A and B versions).
4. **Cooldown / Duration** - Specifies where the card is placed on the cooldown or ongoing effects tracker when its major action is used.
5. **Card Effects** - Provides a quick overview whether the card has an "[Interrupt](#)" and/or "[Ongoing](#)" effect.
6. **Major Action** - Describes the effects of the card if used as a major action.
7. **Spending Options** - Lists spending options available on the roll for the card's major action.
8. **Minor Action** - Describes the effects of the card if used as a minor action.

COOLDOWN



When a card is used as a major action, it is placed on the cooldown tracker of player board at the position designated by its cooldown value. This is done **after** handling the entire action, including spending options.

Effects may reduce the cooldown of cards, and cooldowns may also be reduced by performing a **Minor Action**. Using a minor action returns the card used to the player's hand and **moves each card on their cooldown tracker one place to the left**.

If a card on position one would have its cooldown reduced, it is returned to its owner's hand.

Failed Spellcasting

While spells have a cooldown value like any other ability card, if a player fails a spell by not meeting the required target number, then that card goes to cooldown one regardless of its regular cooldown.

ONGOING EFFECTS



Some ability cards have a section on their major action that is marked out by an "ONGOING" header.

When an ongoing effect is used (instead of potential other effects on the card), the **card is placed at the designated spot on the effects tracker rather than the cooldown tracker**.

As long as that ability card is on the effects tracker, the effects of that card apply.

At the beginning of each game round, reduce the duration of every ongoing effect by one. When a card on position one would have its duration reduced, return it to its owner's hand.



(A player board with two active, ongoing effects and their remaining duration.)

INTERRUPT EFFECTS



Some ability cards have a section on their Major Action that is marked by an "INTERRUPT" header.

Players can activate the effects at any time, so long as the implied requirements are met, by playing it directly from their hand, regardless whether it is their turn or not.

They **briefly interrupt the game flow**, handle their interrupt card, and resume the game where it was left before that effect.

If the interrupt was part of the card's major action, the card is placed on the "Cooldown" or "Effects" tracker after usage as appropriate.

ABILITY TOKENS

Some abilities will ask players to place that ability's token on the game board.

While these tokens **have to be clearly placed onto a specific square, they do not block movement or line-of-sight**.

If a model is already present in the square, place the token below it.

There is no limit as to how many ability tokens can be on a single square.

INITIATIVE

The **Initiative Tracker** determines the activation order of all heroes, enemies, and minions during each round.

Players determine their initiative at the beginning of each round (see "**Reveal Cards & Initiative**"), and once the round begins, activate entities from highest to lowest initiative value.

In case of a tie, heroes and minions always act before enemies. If heroes and minions share the same initiative, the players may decide the activation order among themselves.

Once everyone has activated once, the round ends.

ITEMS & ITEM SLOTS



Each hero has a variety of item slots, as displayed on their player board, to which they can equip items according to each slot's type:

Hand slots hold hand-held items such as weapons and shields. Two-handed weapons are placed in between the two hand slots to indicate that the item is held with both hands.

Armor slots hold armor, robes, and similar items. Each character has only one armor slot.

Gear slots hold miscellaneous equipment items like rings, helmets, gloves, pauldrons, and so on. Except for rings, a hero cannot equip more than one item worn on the same part of the body (back, boots, helmet, and so on).

Backpack slots can hold any item, but these items are not considered to be equipped, and provide no effects unless they specifically say otherwise.

Consumable slots are akin to backpack slots, but can only hold consumable items such as potions, as designated in the item's keywords.

VESSELS

Vessels are the physical forms a heroic soul inhabits to enable it to interact with the world, and each of them confers upon the soul certain powers which reflect the story of its former life.

Each vessel is represented by its own card and corresponding standee.

Each vessel has one of four rarities: common, rare, legendary, or mythical, and generally, the rarer the vessel, the stronger and/or more specialized it is.

Players can find and possess new vessels by:

- Finding vessels during the town phase between adventures.
- Finding vessels during adventures who succumbed to the eternal slumber.
- Acquiring vessels as a reward for completing certain adventures.

When a player obtains a new vessel, they discard their old vessel and put the new vessel card onto their player board in its place.

Place a 'Perk Blocker' token on each of the new vessel's perks except the first, update the three scratch bars with the specified number of scratch tokens, and replace that player's standee with the standee for their new vessel.

Locked perks become available by spending Legend Points (see "**Vessel Perk Unlocks**").

EXCHANGING VESSELS

In the same way players would possess a new vessel (see "**Vessels**"), players who are adjacent to each other can spend two movement points to switch their vessels. Both swap the vessel cards and standees, immediately unlearn all perks except for the first one, and also switch all scratches and wounds.

However, they retain all items and ability cards.

DAMAGE & DEATH

Heroes and enemies both accumulate damage and eventually die. However, damage is tracked and calculated differently between them.

HERO DAMAGE

Each hero has **three rows for scratches**. The amount of scratches they can suffer depends on the vessel's toughness for that row. Place as many scratch tokens on the player board with the healthy side up.

Whenever the hero suffers a scratch, flip a scratch token to its damaged side.

If the current row already has the maximum amount of scratches, apply these scratches to the next row.

Whenever the first scratch in a new row is turned to its damaged side, that hero suffers a wound!

On the row that is now full of scratches, flip all scratches to the healthy side up, and then put a wound token over that entire row.

Each wound adds a Cursed Die to all attack, defense and spellcasting rolls.

As soon as a hero would suffer a third wound (by suffering a scratch when their third row of scratches is full), **they die** immediately.

Replace their standee with the "Vesselless Soul" standee, and discard their current vessel card (revealing the "Vesselless Soul" reference).



A knight vessel with four scratches. He will not suffer a wound until taking at least two more scratches.



The knight after two more scratches which overflowed to the second row, causing a wound.

WOUND & SCRATCH HEALING

A hero who heals all their scratches does not automatically heal wounds on the rows above them, and as long as the wound exists, the hero cannot regain the rows of scratches they cover.

Wounds may be healed only when explicitly stated by an effect, and effects that heal wounds remove the lowest wound token first.

If a wound is healed when a hero has one or more scratches, move those scratches up to the newly revealed row.

If a wound would be healed but there are more scratches present than that wound bar's toughness (its number of scratches), instead heal a number of scratches equal to the toughness of the wound bar that would have been healed.



The knight after having four scratches healed (only one could actually be healed because of the wound).



The knight after an ability heals his wound, unblocking the row and revealing healthy tokens.

ENEMY DAMAGE

Enemies track damage in a much simpler way than heroes, never suffering scratches, only wounds.

When an enemy is attacked, **divide the total power from the attack roll by the defense value of the target, rounding down** (if a target has a defense of zero or less, treat its defense as one instead).

| | 3P | 4P | 5P |
|---|----|----|----|
| # | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| ♥ | 2 | 2 | 2 |

(the defense value on the blue shield, and the maximum amount of wounds next to the heart, depending on the amount of heroes participating)

The result is the amount of enemy wound tokens put next to the corresponding standee, and it is possible for an attack to cause no damage if its total power is less than the target's defense.

Once the amount of accumulated wounds is equal to that enemy's maximum wounds, it is defeated and removed from the game board.

MINION DAMAGE

Friendly minions such as summoned creatures or hired mercenaries take damage in the same fashion as the vessels of the heroes.

Instead of tracking that damage on a player board however, put the necessary amount of minion scratch tokens (which are the same as wounds for enemies) next to the minion's standee on the game board.

A minion can suffer as many scratches as it has toughness. Once their scratches exceed that amount, they suffer a wound (which kills and removes them immediately).

STATUS EFFECTS

There are a variety of status effects in Soulless Vessel that can affect heroes and enemies in negative ways.

Each status affects heroes and enemies in different ways, and by default, **minions ignore all negative effects entirely**.

Status effects for heroes are tracked on the effects track of the player board, alongside ongoing abilities. The card representing the status effect is placed at the spot corresponding to its duration, and its duration decreases each round in the same way as for any other ongoing effect card.

As long as an effect is present on the tracker, its effects apply to that hero.

A hero can have each effect only once. If they would get the same effect again, move the effect card to the new duration unless it's already higher.

Status effects for enemies are tracked as small tokens next to their model.

Enemies can have **each status effect token up to two times at once**, with the exception of 'Bleed', which can stack up to four times.

At the end of that model's activation, remove one token of each status effect type.

BLEED

Heroes: Whenever the hero performs a Major Action, including "Interrupt" abilities, they immediately suffer a scratch. Minor Actions are unaffected.

Enemies: Whenever a 'Bleed' token gets removed from the enemy, roll one Power Die (red) and deal the result as damage.

CRIPPLE

For both heroes and enemies, moving one square costs two movement points instead of one.

If a movement action provides an uneven amount (e.g., 3 movement points), then one movement point is potentially wasted (unless used for “**Special Movement Actions**”).

DAZED

Heroes: The hero treats all major actions they use as if their cooldown was one higher than normal, to a maximum of five. Ongoing effects and their duration are unaffected.

Enemies: The enemy cannot use their bones or skull abilities, regardless of what its AI card (or trait cards) would otherwise dictate.

STUN

Heroes: The hero can place at most one card from their hand face down at the beginning of the round.

They can still use the empty slot for cooldown reduction (see “**Ability Cards**”).

Enemies: If that enemy's AI card has a threat value of 10 or less, the enemy model will skip its entire turn (it will still remove negative effects as usual at the end of its activation).

Additionally, the enemy cannot perform attacks of opportunity (see “**Attacks Of Opportunity**”).

WEAKEN

Heroes: The hero adds two cursed dice to all their defense rolls.

Enemies: Heroes who attack the enemy add +1 Power to their attacks for each weaken token on the enemy model.

CURSED

Only heroes can suffer from this effect.

Each time the hero makes an attack, defense, or spellcasting roll, they must discard a card of their choice from their hand on cooldown two (2) unless they spend a plus symbol specifically to avoid this effect.

TERROR

Only heroes can suffer from this effect.

As long as the hero suffers from terror, they may not reduce the duration of their other negative effects by any means.

EXPLORATION

Whenever a new room is revealed by opening a door, the player who opened it **draws the top card from the exploration deck** and reveals it.

Typically, this card will be a room card, which you will connect to the dungeon, but occasionally it will be a quest trigger card. In either case, follow the instructions below.

QUEST TRIGGERS

In some cases, the revealed card from the exploration deck will be a **quest trigger** and not a map tile. In this case, refer to the description of the adventure for instructions on how to proceed.

CONNECTING ROOMS

To connect a new tile to the dungeon, first **roll an enhancement die (blue)**, and consult the Book of Exploration to determine the tile's layout.

The layout determines which room entrance connects to the door just opened (and therefore the orientation of the newly placed tile).

Align the specified entrance with the exit of the current tile directly if possible.

If that's not possible because the new tile would overlap an existing tile, use **up to two** generic connector pieces (2x4 tile straight corridors and/or L-shaped corners) to make an arrangement that works, ensuring everything aligns perfectly and nothing overlaps.



(usable connector piece examples)

If it's not possible to place the tile even using connectors, instead, place an end-cap piece over

the door that was just opened, and replace an end cap closing another entrance anywhere in the dungeon with a door.

PLACING LOOT & DOORS

After successfully placing a map tile, place the rest of the room's contents as outlined in the layout:

- Place the indicated end caps (marked as red bars) and doors (marked as yellow arrows)
- Place any treasure chests and vessels

Note that chests and vessels are only placed if the number of heroes is equal to or greater than the number specified on the room layout.

For each vessel token placed, draw a random vessel card (ignoring peasants and mythical vessels) and place it near the token.



(a map tile with a door and an end cap piece)

PLACING ENEMIES

Lastly, if the layout displays any red or blue sockets, then **enemies will spawn** on this map tile.

For each color of socket in the layout, draw an enemy card from the pile of enemies for this adventure (if you run out, shuffle the used enemy cards from the adventure into a fresh pile).

Determine the number of standees to place based on the number of participating heroes, and start filling the sockets based on their numbering, going from lowest to highest.

If a socket is occupied by something, place the model as close as possible to the socket instead.

If a group of enemies would spawn that shares a type with an existing enemy group, add the specified number of models as usual, but discard the duplicate enemy card - all models of the same type will act based on the reference card that was on the Initiative tracker already.

After spawning enemies, **draw an AI card** for each enemy reference card, attach it to it, and adjust their initiative accordingly.

If the resulting initiative is higher than the current initiative step of the ongoing game round, place them at initiative zero instead.

KEY TERMS

The following key terms, commonly used on ability and enemy cards, have special rules meaning:

NIMBLE

A model that is nimble **can move through/over other models during its movement**. It may not end its movement on the same square as another model.

Note that in most cases, nimble is only granted for an individual movement action, and does not apply to other movement actions during the same turn.

SLIPPERY

Heroes or minions that are slippery do not provoke attacks of opportunity when moving near enemy models (see "[Escape Tests & Attacks Of Opportunity](#)").

Note that, like nimble, in most cases slippery is granted only for an individual movement action and not for all of a hero's movement in general.

BULKY

Models that are bulky are large and always **occupy four squares**. However, they **only have to stand on at least two walkable squares** at any one time. For example, an Ogre may have two of its squares standing inside the outer wall of a map tile, while the other two squares of the model occupy walkable squares.

In addition to that, their movement is performed **square by square and they displace other models** as they go.

If a bulky model moves into a square that is occupied, **the displaced model is moved to an unoccupied adjacent square** of the players' choice. If there is no unoccupied adjacent square, then that model gets displaced to the closest unoccupied square instead.



A minotaur boss (which is "Bulky") wants to move onto a tile that is occupied by a hero.



The hero can decide to occupy any adjacent tile.

KNOCKBACK

Both heroes and enemies can cause knockback, but the mechanics differ between them.

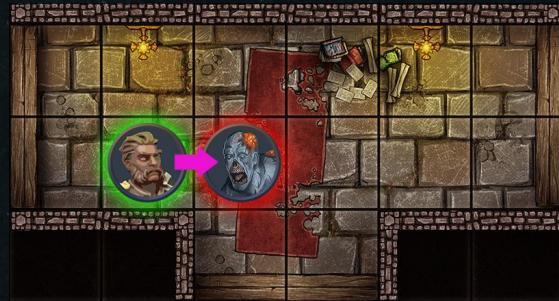
Heroes who cause knockback move a targeted model up to the specified number of squares away from their position. Each square of the movement must be further away from the hero than the previous position, but the hero specifies which square the target moves to within the requirement.

If so desired, the hero need not move the target the full distance of the knockback.

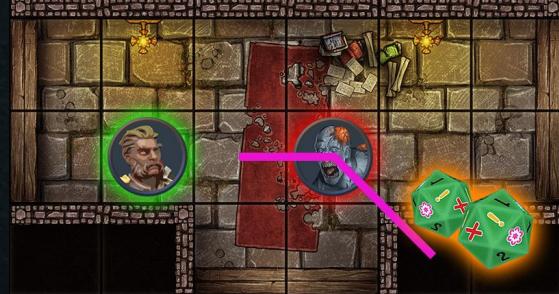
If a knockback effect would move an enemy against another model or a wall, then roll one Standard Die (green) for each remaining point of the knockback effect, and **deal the result as damage**.

As usual, it is not possible to roll more than four Standard Dice at once.

In cases where it matters, movement caused by knockback is not a move action, as it is involuntary.



A hero causes knockback (3) against an adjacent enemy.



The hero decides to knock the enemy away by one tile, and uses the remaining two points from the knockback effect to knock the enemy against the wall. The hero rolls two standard dice as damage, both of which show a critical! The hero deals two wounds against the enemy.

Enemies that cause knockback move the affected hero away from them as outlined above, but the hero determines which direction they'll be moved.

The target must choose a direction that would allow them to make use of as much of the knockback distance possible.

Heroes do not take damage from knockback.

PULL

The pull effect is the opposite of knockback, forcing models to move closer to the attacker.

Forced movement from pulling may be divided among any number of targets, so long as each square moved brings the target closer to the source of the effect.

In cases where it matters, movement caused by pulling is not a move action, as it is involuntary.

RETREAT

Enemies with this keyword will perform an additional movement action after their default attack during their activation. This movement must maximize the distance from the hero that was attacked. If there are multiple viable destinations, the players decide which the enemy moves to.

When the retreat keyword is applied in a scenario where the enemy didn't just make an attack, the enemy must instead maximize its distance from the closest hero when it starts its retreat (choose on a tie).



A *Swarm Of Rats* just performed an attack against a hero and now performs Retreat (5). It moves in the opposite direction, since that will allow the Rats to maximize their distance from the hero.



Although the *Swarm Of Rats* is cornered in this scenario, it will still run past the heroes as this will allow it to maximize the distance to the hero it has just attacked (the one in the middle).

HIT MULTIPLE / ADDITIONAL

Some ability cards allow the player to hit multiple or additional targets.

In these cases, perform the attack or spell once as usual against the primary target, but apply the resulting power and any generated effects against each of the additional targets as well.

REACH

Some heroes and enemies may have the reach keyword, typically as a benefit from their weapon.

Reach gives melee attacks a range of two squares (instead of being limited to adjacent targets). **Line-of-sight** must still be valid.

TOUGHNESS

Toughness describes the amount of scratches a hero or minion can sustain before suffering a wound on a given bar of scratches.

For heroes, the toughness value varies for each row based on their vessel.

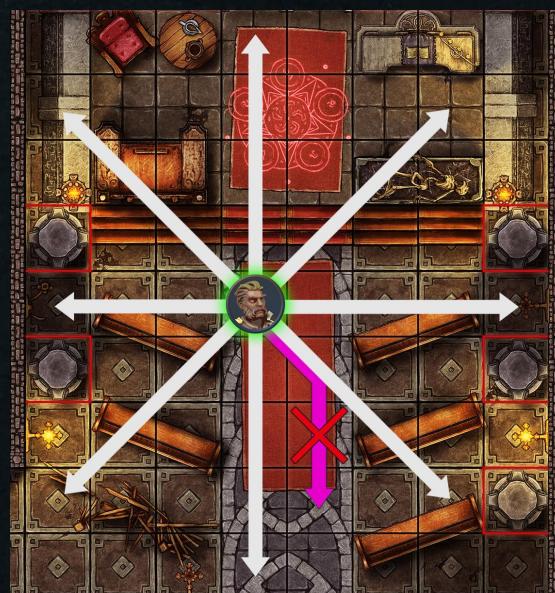
STRAIGHT / DIAGONAL LINE

Some enemies and abilities cards refer to either a "straight line" or a "diagonal line".

A straight line is a line that goes strictly north, south, east, or west.

A diagonal line goes strictly northeast, southwest, southwest, or northwest.

In either case, squares outside these direct lines are not valid targets or destinations as applicable.



In the shown example, the white directions are all valid, as they all emerge from the hero's tile in a straight or purely diagonal direction.

The purple line is not viable.

BLAST TEMPLATE

Some abilities make use of the blast template.

This tear-drop shaped template can be placed with the tip anywhere within the square of the executing model, and rotated to any angle.

All tiles that are at least partially covered by the template are affected, but each enemy can only be affected once.



The tiles colored in purple mark the ones affected by the blast token. Any model on these tiles would become a target of this ability.

GIVING UP

There may be adventures that simply go south for the entire party. Maybe a few heroes are already dead, or there are too many powerful enemies to deal with.

The party always has the option to give up on the current adventure, as long as there are no enemies within range 3 of any hero.

When retreating, the adventure is added to the adventure tracker, but the party won't get any of its specific rewards.

However, they get to keep all treasures that were collected during the adventure.

Proceed to the town phase as usual.

RULE OF AMBIGUITY

We strive to make these rules as complete as possible, but if you discover a case where rules are ambiguous in terms of meaning, tie-breaking, order of operations, or some other respect, the party should assume **they can resolve it in whatever way is most beneficial to them**.

Afterall, this is a cooperative game where the players are the heroes of the story.

GAME ROUNDS

Each game round is divided into six steps, as outlined below:

1. Reduce Ongoing Effects
2. Events
3. AI Cards & Enemy Initiative
4. Place Ability Cards
5. Reveal Ability Cards & Hero Initiative
6. Heroes, Enemy, and Minion Turns

1. REDUCE ONGOING EFFECTS

The first step of each game round is to reduce the duration of any ongoing effects on heroes by one.

Ability cards that leave the tracker go back to the hand of the hero who owns them.

Status effects (cripple, bleed, etc.) that leave the tracker get discarded, and the hero won't suffer from their effects any longer.

2. EVENTS

At the beginning of each round (except for the first one of each adventure), one player rolls a ten-sided die (d10) and adds the current accumulated threat total to the roll.

Find the result on the event table of the current adventure and follow the rules for that event.

If the event adds threat, add the specified number of threat tokens to a pile near the event table for visibility (always start each eventure with no threat).

| Events | | | |
|--------------|----------------------------------|--|------------|
| d10 + threat | Event | Effect | Add threat |
| 1 - 3 | Plunder Fallen Adventurers | A random hero draws item cards until a "Consumable" is drawn and keeps it. | +2 |
| 3 - 5 | Loot What's Necessary! | A hero of the party's choice may take an improvised item (tier 0) of their choice. | +1 |
| 6 - 8 | Glimpse Into The Neverwake Realm | A random hero suffers a scratch | - |
| 9 - 10 | Resurrection Sickness | A random hero suffers 'Weaken (2)'. | - |
| 11 | Twitching And Shaking | The first hero to act this round suffers a scratch and 'Terror (2)'. | - |
| 12 - 13 | Defiling Presence | A random hero suffers 'Cursed (3)' OR suffers 2 scratches (their choice). | - |
| 14+ | Neverwake Apparition | Immediate Apparition! A Neverwake Apparition comes from the Neverwake Realm. If an apparition appears in a group, it adds one additional modifier to a maximum of 3. | - |



A player has just rolled a 7, and the party already accumulated two threat for the given adventure. The

total result is a 9, which triggers the "Resurrection Sickness" event for that round.

3. AI CARDS & ENEMY INITIATIVE

For every enemy group that is still alive, draw one new AI card and replace the previous one (if applicable). Start with the group that has the highest initiative on the initiative tracker. On a tie, start with the group that was placed on that initiative step first.

This will determine the enemies' behavior for the round, so that players can tactically plan around it.

Each AI card also modifies the initiative of the enemy group. Add the initiative modifier to the base initiative of the enemy group, and use the total to place that group in the appropriate initiative slot.



(the Corrupted Humans ended up on initiative slot 2 for this round as their base initiative is 2, and their AI card has a modifier of 0)

If two enemies have the same initiative, place them in the order they were assigned to that initiative slot. They will be activated in that order later.

4. PLACE ABILITY CARDS

Now that the players have enough information about the tactical situation, **all players can place up to two cards** in the slots on their player board:

Cards are **placed face down** and players are not allowed to make any comments about what they plan to execute.

Only proceed to the next step once all players have finalized their decision and placed cards.

SECRET PLANS

Once a new round begins, the party is forbidden from discussing tactics and strategy until step five, when ability cards are revealed.

It is of utmost importance that every player makes their own decisions, and all the players' actions need to be planned with the information that is available at this point - this is a key part of the game's tactical challenge, and helps avoid the game bogging down in decision paralysis.

Clarifications and rules questions are always allowed however.

Once all players have revealed their ability cards simultaneously, everyone is free to discuss their intent and tactics for the round.

5. REVEAL CARDS & HERO INITIATIVE

At this step, all players **reveal the cards** that they committed to. Now they are **free to chat about their intentions and tactics**.

Each hero - coordinating with the group - chooses the initiative of either one of their revealed ability cards and places their soul token on the corresponding space on the initiative tracker.

If an ability card slot was left empty, treat this like an ability card with an initiative value of zero.

Players who share the same initiative may determine their exact order once they are at that initiative step during the round.

6. TURNS

Having determined the order of activation, everyone acts in order as outlined under "**Initiative**".

The actions that can be taken during each creature's turn are outlined in the following sections.

HERO TURN

Once it is a hero's turn, they will first perform their default movement action, and then perform the actions of their placed cards.

Keep in mind that many ongoing effects and vessel perks allow for things to happen at the beginning of a turn (or during it), so now would be the time to handle these.

MOVEMENT

Every vessel comes with a default number of movement points each turn based on their vessel's speed. **This movement action needs to be performed before any actions** from the placed ability cards, otherwise these movement points are lost (see "**Movement**").



(a vessel's speed value)

ABILITY CARDS & ACTIONS

During a player's turn, they can **execute their placed ability cards in any order**, choosing either the **Major or Minor action for each card**.

They may also choose to forfeit an action, or to only use parts of an ability. For instance, a Minor Action that grants a movement action and an attack can be used to only generate the movement action, ignoring the attack entirely.

However, **the instructions of any action must be performed in the listed order**.

If a hero has an **empty ability card slot** for any reason, each empty card slot **reduces the cooldown** of each card on their cooldown track by one, as if they'd performed a Minor Action.

To be able to **attack enemies**, a hero needs to perform an action that allows to do so.

MINION TURN

Minions are **controllable** characters or monsters that aid the party during an adventure. The group should discuss collectively what each minion does, but the owner of the minion has the last word.

Unless otherwise specified by the card that creates them, minions act at initiative step zero (before enemy groups that are at the same initiative step), and just like heroes, they can perform attacks and defense rolls using a Standard Die.

During a minion's activation, it may **move its speed** and then **perform a melee or ranged attack (if it has any range)**, as specified in its rules text.

As a special rule, **all minions can spend any number of plus and star symbols to add +1 power to their attack rolls**.

Like heroes, minions must perform “**Escape Tests**” when starting movement adjacent to an enemy.

ENEMY TURN

An enemy group acts after all heroes and minions on the same initiative step have acted. If there are multiple enemy groups on the initiative step, start with the one that was placed on that initiative step first and go in that order.

ENEMY CARD



Each enemy is represented by an enemy card, which is placed on the initiative tracker.

Below the card’s name, that enemy’s speed, attack value and attack range are listed. If there is no range, then that enemy performs melee attacks by default.

Above the descriptions for abilities on the blue-grey shield, the defense value is shown.

Next to it is information about the amount of models spawn for the group, as well as the maximum wounds each model can suffer before being defeated. Both of these values depend on the amount of participating heroes in the adventure.

ACTIVATION ORDER

When an enemy group becomes active, **each of its models gets an individual activation**, one after another.

Start with the model that is closest to the starting position of that adventure (where the heroes began the adventure) measured by walking distance in squares. Then work your way from closest to furthest as seen from that starting position.

In case of a tie, the players can decide which model acts first.

TARGET PRIORITY

Initially, consider all heroes or minions that this enemy model can reach as viable targets. Consider their speed as well as their attack range if applicable.

Then narrow the selection down by looking at the first instruction on the AI card. On a tie, use the second and third instructions to narrow the selection down further. If there is still a tie, the players may select which hero or minion that enemy model will go after.

The result is the hero or minion that the enemy model will attempt to attack.

The behavior of each of these targeting behaviors is outlined below:

Closest: The enemy prefers whichever target is closest to it, so allowing for an attack with as little movement as possible.

Furthest: The enemy prefers a target that is as far away as possible (distance measured in squares), but that can still be reached this round.

Previous: The enemy prefers to attack the same hero or minion that it attacked with its last attack. If it didn’t attack anyone so far or that target cannot be reached this round, ignore this instruction.

Lowest Initiative: The enemy prefers to attack whichever hero or minion has the lowest initiative this round.

Most Unwounded: The enemy prefers the target that has the fewest wounds.

Most Scratched: The enemy prefers the target with the most current scratches (not considering wounds).

Most Wounded: The enemy prefers the target that has the most wounds (not considering scratches).



In this example, the Goblin Archer has the priority “Furthest, Lowest Initiative”. It has a speed of 3 and an attack range of 5, so it can reach any hero 8 squares away from it. The hero to the far left would be furthest, but is one square too far away. The other

two heroes in the middle are equally far away, so the second priority decides in this case: the upper hero will be attacked as he has a lower initiative. The Goblin moves one square closer to get the hero in range, and then performs the attack. The hero will have to perform a defense roll.

MOVEMENT

Once an enemy has determined its target, it will move as little as possible to be able to attack that target. Melee enemies will typically move to become adjacent to their target, while ranged enemies only move as much as is needed to get the target within their range and line-of-sight.

If there are multiple positions that would fulfill the criteria, the players choose.

If an enemy cannot reach a position from which it can attack at all, it will simply move as much as it can towards the closest hero or minion, regardless of its target selection criteria.

ATTACKS & DEFENSE

Once the enemy model has been positioned, it will make an attack against its target.

Enemies don't roll for attacks, they simply deal a number of scratches equal to their attack value to their target, and their target makes a defense roll to reduce this damage according to their power rolled.



3

(an enemy's attack value)

A hero will always **suffer at least one scratch** from an attack, unless they have specific effects or rolled a critical on their defense roll.

An attack that is performed by a melee enemy or by an enemy that is adjacent to the target is considered a melee attack, even if that enemy has an attack range. Any attack that is performed from a range is a ranged attack. This may be relevant for certain situational bonus dice.

Check "**Hero Damage**" to re-cap on how damage against heroes gets tracked, and "**Minion Damage**" for minions.

ABILITIES

Enemies typically have three abilities: a passive, a bones ability, and a skull ability.

If the AI card shows either (or both) of these symbols, then that ability is available to that enemy group for the current round, and functions as described.

The **passive ability always applies** to the enemy, regardless of active symbols on AI cards, and isn't disabled with the dazed status effect.

AI MODIFIERS

In some cases, an AI card will list an additional modifier that gets applied to the entire enemy group for the round. It may modify their attack value, defense, speed or grant them the 'Nimble' keyword for all their movements during that round.

THREAT VALUE

Each AI card has a threat value which describes the overall danger the behavior poses to the heroes.

In some cases, enemy groups are required to draw two AI cards each round and pick the card with the higher threat value.

This value is also relevant to see if a stun status effect on an enemy would force them to skip their turn (see "**Stun**").

END TURN EFFECTS

The enemy might perform abilities or trigger effects at the end of their turn.

In any case, it **removes one token from each type of ongoing effect** (Cripple, Stun etc.).

END ROUND



The initiative tracker has a button that will automatically discard all assigned AI cards, and place the hero's soul tokens back to their starting position.

After that, a new game round can begin!

FIRST GAME SETUP

The game is played over a course of 15 adventures, as a persistent campaign, where all participating players keep and develop their heroes from beginning to end.

SELECT ROLES

Before jumping into the fray to fight the army of the Neverwake Dragon, the players should discuss what role each hero is going to play in the group.

Roles are fulfilled by the combination of abilities, vessel, and equipment you choose, so they're ultimately flexible, but it's recommended that each group has at least one of each of the following:

Tank - A group's tank will protect the party from harm. They will attempt to position themselves in a way that ensures most attacks will be directed at them, and build their characters to survive their place at the focus of all that damage.

Supporter - A group's supporter keeps the group alive by using healing or effects that protect them from harm. They may focus on making their allies stronger or their enemies weaker, but in either case they magnify the abilities of the entire group.

Sorcerer - A group's sorcerer is a versatile hero who typically focuses on ranged damage combined with effects that enhance allies or weaken enemies. Sorcerers usually focus on spell-based abilities.

Damage Dealer - A group's damage dealer is specialized in taking out enemies quickly. They may focus on single target or multi target damage, using ranged or melee attacks, but it's always about the damage, and they're key to getting threats off the battlefield fast.

There are many builds that don't cleanly fit into a role, and players are encouraged to combine concepts to develop a unique character that complements their group and style. The smaller the party, the more you should consider creatively combining roles to ensure they're all covered.

SELECT STARTING DECKS

Each player begins the game with any six basic (un-upgraded) ability cards of their choice.

To make getting started easier, players may wish to select from one of the 15 themed starter decks the

game provides. Each fits an overarching theme (e.g. 'Protector') and a more specific flavor within it.

These decks are tried and tested, but they're only a starting point, and you'll add and swap cards from them throughout the campaign, to take your build in your particular direction.

SELECT VESSELS

After selecting a starting deck, players choose their starting vessels.

In each party, **one player** - traditionally the oldest, but choose in any way you like - **starts the game with the peasant vessel**.

Each other player begins with **any common vessel of their choice**, keeping in mind that there are only two copies of each common vessel available.

After choosing a vessel, the player places the vessel card onto their game board, adjusts their perks and scratches as outlined in the section "**Vessels**" and takes the corresponding miniature.

If two players pick the same type of vessel, tint the color of the base of each standee to differentiate the two (or better, use a completely different miniature as a stand-in).

The remaining vessels should be shuffled together as a vessel deck.

SELECT ITEMS

To determine the starting items for the party, you will draw cards at random from the pile of items, ignoring any yellow- or red-background cards drawn, and drawing a new item to replace them.

From the tier one deck, draw **one card per hero** to start, all of which you will keep. Then, for each hero, **draw three cards and pick one** of them to keep, discarding the others.

Then, finally, for each hero, select up to one item from the deck of improvised (tier zero) items.

You may distribute these items among the party members in whatever way seems best, with each player placing their items on the appropriate item slots on their player board.

DECK BUILDER

Building a plan for your hero is a key part of the Soulless Vessel experience, and we've created a **deck building tool** to make it easier for you. Simply create a new deck (with the "+" button) and select your chosen starter deck to have it automatically shown.

If you don't have a complete plan from the beginning though, don't worry - your plan will inevitably change as you go in any case!

SELECT SOUL TOKENS

Next, each player should pick a soul token that best represents the flavor of their character and deck.



Which token you choose has no mechanical impact on the game, but each token should be unique, as it will identify the player on the initiative tracker.

Discard the ones that are not being used.

SELECT DIFFICULTY

The party should next **agree on the difficulty of their campaign**. Obviously, nothing will keep you from adjusting the difficulty between adventures (especially upwards), but you need to make the initial choice to get started. There are four difficulty levels available in addition to the **optional difficulty rules**:

DEFAULT

When you play with the default difficulty, **no additional rules apply** and you simply play the game as described in the rule book.

This difficulty is recommended for parties that want a more relaxed game experience or play this genre for the first time.

CHALLENGER

This difficulty level will ask the party to improvise and discuss tactics more often. This is the recommended difficulty for experienced fans of this

genre and those who have already played similar games before.

On challenger difficulty, every enemy group (except bosses) gets a random trait card when it spawns, in addition to any other Traits it would normally get.

NIGHTMARE

On nightmare difficulty, you're much more likely to get wiped out and lose the entire campaign, making this the ideal difficulty for experienced players who've perfected strong builds with powerful synergies, and want to test their metal.

In this mode, in addition to the rule from challenger, you replace all enemy cards with alternate versions created specifically for this difficulty.

+1 MODE

This difficulty is not recommended for anyone who hasn't finished at least one full campaign, ideally on nightmare difficulty. It's intended only for players seeking a truly brutal life or death challenge.

In this game mode, play as you would on nightmare, but add an additional one, two, or even three trait cards to non-boss enemies, in the same way described for challenger mode above.

PREPARE FIRST ADVENTURE

And finally, to prepare your first adventure, follow the "New Adventure Setup" instructions below for the adventure called "The Escape".

You'll be able to choose your adventures in the future, but every campaign begins there.

ADVENTURE SETUP

When the group has determined which adventure they want to play next, make sure all elements of the previous adventure have been removed, then follow these steps to get ready.

EXPLORATION DECK

First, prepare the exploration deck, which will be used to determine which map tiles are added as the dungeon is explored (see “[Exploration](#)”).

Remove any cards specified in the adventure information and put them aside, then shuffle the remaining exploration cards face down. Never mix the exploration cards of two different themes or chapters at this step.

Then, assemble the exploration deck, interspersing quest triggers and other specified cards with cards drawn randomly, as the adventure outlines.

The Book Of Adventures will list the cards from bottom to top, so merely take the cards as listed, one after another, and put them on top of your exploration deck, face down, until all mentioned types of cards have been added to the deck.

ENEMY DECK

Take all the enemy cards listed in the adventure’s description and shuffle them into their own face-down pile, placing it above the the initiative tracker in the corresponding slot.

EVENTS

Open the book of adventures to the event table for the adventure, and set that to one side for easy reference, as you will roll on this table each round.

FIRST ROOM

Unless the description for a particular adventure says otherwise, each adventure begins with just the dungeon entrance map tile.

Place the heroes and minions anywhere within the starting area, and place doors on each of the map tile’s exits.

STORY INTRO

At this stage, one player should read the intro text out loud to the party to set the scene. There may be additional story descriptions during the adventure (see “[Quest Triggers](#)”).

With this done, you’re ready to play, and can begin exploring the dungeon!

QUEST TRIGGERS

Most adventures will have one or more quest triggers. Whenever a quest trigger card is drawn from the exploration deck, refer to the quest trigger description in the adventure.

Perform all instructions and read out story descriptions, then proceed as usual.

It’s important to remember which quest trigger is the next (the adventure lists them in order), as the order is crucial for adventures to function.

AFTER THE ADVENTURE

After the adventure is completed, one player will read the outro to everyone.

All scratches and wounds are healed, all effects are removed, and all ability cards are returned to their owners’ hands.

If the adventure was completed successfully, grant the party the rewards listed in the description.

Then you can clear the board and proceed to the town phase.

TOWN PHASE

When an adventure is over the party returns to town. In this phase of the game you will expand your deck, buy and sell items, and generally update your hero to prepare for the next adventure.

There are several activities the party can participate in town, which can be done in any order.

SHARED CURRENCIES

Coins, Soul Shards and Legend Points are a shared resource for the entire party. The group will collectively decide what to do with the currencies, and they aren't carried by any particular hero.

REPAIR

Items may accumulate wear during adventures. In town items can be repaired, and 'wear' tokens can be removed for a cost of 5 Coins per token.

SELL ITEMS

During the town phase, the party may sell items they own to gain additional resources.

When selling an item, the party gains **half the item's displayed value** (round up), in the appropriate currency for the item (Coins or Soul Shards).

The value of an item is **not** influenced by any 'wear' tokens the item may have suffered.

BUY ITEMS

Each time you return to town, shops have new inventory available for purchase.

Shuffle the item deck and draw 10 cards, placing them face-up in a row for everyone to see. The party can buy any of these items by paying the displayed costs in Coins.

At the start of the campaign, the pile of items should exclusively consist of Tier-1 item cards. The items of higher tiers will be added later, as mentioned in the chapter transitions in the "Book Of Adventures".

ADDITIONAL INVENTORY

You can also pay to access additional inventory - a few coins to stay the night and see what comes in.

The party can reveal additional rows of cards for 10 coins each, but only one card may be purchased / picked from each of these additional rows.

This option is available for the item shop, the soul shop, and the vessels available in town.

TIER 0 - IMPROVISED ITEMS

The party may always access the entire roster of Tier 0 items (also called "improvised items").

There are no limitations to buying items from this deck of item cards - other than the available Coins.

THE SOUL SHOP

Once the party has reached tier two, they gain access to the soul shop, as mentioned in the tier two transition text.

This is a special item shop with unique purchase options, all of which must be purchased using **Soul Shards** instead of Coins.

Shuffle the soul shop items deck and draw 5 cards, placing them in a face up row.

As with the item shop, players can buy any or all of the items from those initially revealed, and may reveal additional rows of inventory of 5 cards each for 10 Coins as outlined above (see "**Additional Inventory**").

IMMEDIATE USE ITEMS

Some of the consumable items in the soul shop have the **immediate** tag. These items must be used immediately, and cannot be kept in your inventory.

VESSEL OFFERS

In each town there are also people willing to give up their bodies to fight against evil.

Shuffle the vessel deck and draw 3 cards, skipping any legendary, mythical, and peasant vessels, and placing the drawn vessel cards face up.

Any member of the party **may assume any of these vessels, or the peasant vessel if both are not already in use, at no cost**, replacing their previous vessel. The new vessel begins with only the first perk unlocked, as usual.

An additional 3 vessels may be revealed for 10 Coins, as outlined above (see “**Additional Inventory**”).

BUY & UPGRADE ABILITY CARDS

Whenever an adventure is finished (whether successful or not), **each party member obtains one soul experience point**, which they can use to acquire or upgrade ability cards.

Players don't have to spend their soul XP right away, and can choose to save them up if they wish by placing a ‘Special’ token on their ‘Soul XP’ slots on their player board.

BUYING ABILITY CARDS

Players can permanently acquire any base ability card from the deck of abilities for a base cost of **one soul XP if they have eight ability cards or less** already, or **two soul XP if they already have nine or more ability cards**.

You may have any number of ability cards, and once acquired, ability cards remain with you for the rest of the campaign, but you can never have the same ability card twice.

Additionally, the same ability card may only be represented up to two times within the party, no matter if it's a base or upgraded variant.

UPGRADING ABILITY CARDS

Each ability card has two possible upgrades, referred to as its alpha and beta variants.

For one soul XP, a player may upgrade a base card that they already possess, replacing it with either of the two upgrade variants for that card.

You may never have multiple versions of the same ability in your deck at the same time.

RETRAINING CARDS

If you find you'd like to adjust your play style, or that a particular ability just isn't working out the way you imagined, you can **exchange it for another ability card for a cost of 10 Coins**.

Base level cards are exchanged for other base level cards, and upgraded cards for other upgraded cards, so no soul XP is lost in the bargain.

VESSEL PERK UNLOCKS

As the party's legend grows, they gain access to ancient knowledge, training and information through various connections.

All of this may enable a hero to learn more about their vessel and its history to unlock its full potential.

If the party agrees, a player can spend **two Legend points** to unlock either one perk from the second column.

To unlock a perk from the third column, they need to spend **three Legend points**, but this requires having unlocked a perk from the second column.

Keep in mind that by default only one perk can be unlocked and active per column, not both.

To show a perk as unlocked, simply remove the Perk Blocker token that was placed on top of the given perk when the vessel was taken over.

RETAINING SYNCHRONIZATION

When a hero switches vessels for whatever reason, make a note of which perks that player has already unlocked for that vessel.

If the same hero later returns to the same vessel, they retain access to the perks they've already unlocked for it.

SELECT NEXT ADVENTURE

Once they're done with their shopping and upgrades, the party should discuss which adventure they want to play next based on their strengths, interests, and the possible rewards.

The party can pick any adventure that is part of the current campaign tier and which has not been attempted before.

ADVENTURE TRACKER

During the town phase, remember to add the adventure token for the last adventure to the adventure tracker.

Once the specified number of adventures have been completed in a given tier - 3 in most cases -, the party will advance to the next tier and a new set of adventures and items will become available.

CAMPAIN & TIERS

The entire campaign of Soulless Vessel is divided into five distinct tiers, each forming a chapter of the overall story taking place in a unique region such as Nathender, the Leyforest, or the Desert of Shakum.

Each tier introduces new map tiles, enemies and items, and each has its own set of adventures available to be played while the party is in that tier.

The campaign starts at the first chapter and tier called "Nathender".

ADVANCING TIERS

When the party has completed three adventures in a given tier (successful or not), they advance to the next tier of the campaign.

A brief story text sets the scene for the new area, and describes the party's journey.

Additionally, when advancing to a new tier, follow the instructions listed after the story text for introducing new items to the item deck.

THE FIRST TIER

In the very first tier ("Nathender"), keep in mind that the introduction adventure ("The Escape") counts towards the total of three adventures the party will complete in that area.

THE FINAL TIER

In the fifth and final tier, reflecting the rising action towards the finale of the story, the party will play only two adventures of their choice before advancing to their final encounter with the Neverwake Dragon.

FAILING THE CAMPAIGN

It is possible for a party to be wiped out and fail the campaign as a whole.

This occurs **when all players lose their vessel during an adventure** and everyone has become a "Vesselless Soul".

Traditionally in this scenario the campaign is over, and you would start again from the beginning.

Alternatively however, you may simply count the adventure as failed and move on as usual, acquiring new vessels for the party in the town phase.

Afterall, you should play the game in a fashion that is most fun for everyone!

OPTIONAL GAME RULES

This section presents several optional rules that you may use to tailor the experience to your taste.

This section also outlines rules to play entirely alone or with just two players (as opposed to the recommended three to five players).

DIFFICULTY: AT DEATH'S DOOR

With this rule enabled, **all vessels are considered to have one less toughness** on each of the three rows.

This effectively means they can sustain a total of three less scratches before dying.

This makes suffering wounds more likely and requires a more steady usage of healing items and abilities.

DIFFICULTY: NEVERWAKE HORDE

With this rule enabled, enemies either sustain more wounds before dying or appear in greater numbers.

Treat the party as if it had one more hero participating for all purposes of spawning enemies.

This rule cannot be applied when playing with five heroes.

DIFFICULTY: STARVED ECONOMY

With this rule enabled, **all income of Coins is reduced by 50%** (round up).

This applies to items sold (so items sell for 25% of their displayed Coin value), Coins gained from adventure rewards or vessel perks and so on.

This does not affect the income of Soul Shards.

This rule will make rewards feel more rare and appreciable, and forces the party to improvise a lot more with what they have.

DIFFICULTY: SMART & MEAN

With this rule enabled, certain weak AI cards will be removed from the AI card deck entirely, making it more likely for enemies to behave in unforgiving ways or having special abilities enabled.

Simply remove the AI cards with the threat values: 1, 2, 3, 5 and 13.

SINGLEPLAYER / SOLO CAMPAIGN

It is entirely possible to play Soulless Vessel alone.

When playing in this fashion, you will control three heroes. You follow the same rules that a regular party would to pick starter decks, vessels and items.

At the beginning of each round, you can openly commit to two cards per hero (while keeping their decks separated), and commence with the game round after doing so.

Since you will be able to perform highly optimized strategies (as you effectively forfeit the non-communication rule at the beginning of a round), it is recommended to play with a higher difficulty than you normally would.

Other than that, no special rules apply!

2-PLAYER CAMPAIGN

When playing with two players, each player will control two heroes at once.

At the beginning of a round, each player takes the hand cards of one of their two heroes and commits to up to two cards (face down), then does the same procedure for their other hero.

Once both players are ready, reveal the cards as usual and start discussing tactics and strategy.

The repercussions are quite similar to the solo campaign. So also in this case, it is recommended to play with a higher difficulty than you normally would.

TABLETOP SIMULATOR GUIDE

In this section we would like to provide you with a brief introduction of specific features of Soulless Vessel within Tabletop Simulator.

TAKE A SEAT

Upon joining a session, every player needs to choose a virtual seat. This will assign them to a specific player board and location for their hand cards, and give them a distinct color.

At the top right corner, each player clicks on their own name to choose a color. Then you will see orbs at the different locations on the table and simply click on one of them to assume that seat.

SHUFFLE

In many instances, you will need to shuffle a deck of cards. Simply point your mouse cursor at the deck and press "R" (as in "randomize"). The same function works for rolling dice as well.

FLIP

To turn scratches over, hide or reveal ability cards, or reveal cards from other decks, they need to be flipped. While dragging or hovering over an object, press "F" to flip it.

DRAW CARD VS. MOVE DECK

If you quickly "drag and drop" from a stack of cards or stacked tokens, you take the topmost element away from it.

If you want to move the entire stack instead, you can press and hold the mouse until the stack lifts up. Then you can move the entire stack.

VIEW CARD

If you have trouble reading a card or you don't want to adjust your entire camera view for a quick read, you can hold the "ALT" key while hovering over a card or object to get a zoomed-in view of it.

While holding "ALT", you can use your mousewheel to zoom in even further.

LOCK / UNLOCK OBJECT

By pointing your mouse cursor at an object and hitting the "L" key, you can lock an object in place so it won't be accidentally moved.

In the same fashion, an already locked element can be unlocked again to move it around.

This is useful to fix placed map tiles, so that players don't accidentally pick them up when moving models or tokens on the board.

DRAW LINE-OF-SIGHT

To check for line-of-sight, you can simply place your mouse cursor at the origin point (the center of the square) and then hold the "Tab" key while dragging to draw a line between the initial position and your current mouse cursor position. The line will disappear as soon as you release the "Tab" key.

This way you can easily see if the line crosses a non-walkable square and therefore breaks line-of-sight.

LOOK AT FACEDOWN CARDS

There may be cases where you have already placed a card face down and want to quickly see what it was (e.g. in case you forgot).

You can hold "ALT" + "SHIFT" while pointing at the card to see its face-up side.

QUICK DRAW CARD

You can conveniently take a card into your hand by pointing at it with your mouse cursor and hitting the "1" key (the other number keys will draw multiple cards from a pile to your hand, but that isn't usually needed in Soulless Vessel).

ROTATE OBJECT

In some cases, you may want to rotate an object, for instance a map tile or a model on the game board.

While dragging it or hovering over it, press the "Q" or "E" keys to rotate it.

The rotation increments can be set at the right hand end of the top menu.

PING

Sometimes you may want to draw your party's attention to something on the game board, e.g. to mark an enemy or to show them a card.

By hitting the "Tab" key, you can create a ping symbol on your current mouse cursor location. It will show an arrow in your own color and make other players aware of it via a sound effect.

TAKE MULTIPLE FROM BAG

When taking an item from a bag, while still holding the item (with the left mouse), more elements from bags can be taken by using the right mouse button.

DICE ROLLER TOOL

To assist the rolling of dice in Soulless Vessel we've created a number of helpful automatic features built into the game board.

You can automatically produce the correct combination of dice for a given pool by clicking on its name, and make one-off adjustments using the + and - buttons next to each die type.

Cursed Dice from wounds will automatically be added to the dice pool as well.

Rolling these dice with the roll button or pressing the results button will automatically summarize the results of the roll for the table, and you can clear these dice from the table with the clear button.

The automatic dice pool buttons read the selection of die-tokens you've placed in the row just below them on the player board, so you must keep these tokens up to date for this feature to function.

END ROUND BUTTON



The displayed button can be found on the initiative tracker. It should be pressed whenever a round has ended. This function will automatically discard all AI cards and collect the heroes' Soul Tokens to go back to their default positions.

END OF THE RULE BOOK

We want to thank you for playing our game and we hope you will enjoy it!

We want to encourage our players to be active members of our community by asking questions, providing feedback or ideas. For that reason, consider joining our Discord:

<https://discord.gg/zsBjz3xaEW>

In case you enjoy playing Soulless Vessel and want to help speed up the creation of future campaign chapters, please consider subscribing to our Patreon. 100% of the funding will be used to pay for art works or other operational costs:

<https://www.patreon.com/soullessvessel>