

TAVERN GAMES

GAMES FOR DUNGEONS MASTERS TO BRING SOME LIFE TO THE IN BETWEEN

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TAVERN GAMES



Dungeons and Dragons is a lot of things. It's harrowing escapes from collapsing caves by the skin of your teeth. It's sword clanging battles that fill fields of green with the shouts of the dying. It's sneaking past a snoring dragon to plunder a heaping pile of gold and jewels.

And.. it's down time. Hanging out in the inn common room, or resting your weary legs on a grungy barstool in a dimly lit tavern. But the time spent between adventures can be time that your players enjoy most of all. It's a chance to get to know one another, for characters to open up about their pasts, the memories of adventures gone hysterically wrong, or loved ones sadly lost. It's a time to drink, and laugh. A time to bond. And a time to play.

HOW THE GAMES WORK

All of the games discussed in the pages ahead are designed to be played with nothing more than what you already have at your table, mainly d20's and d6's. Individual stats and modifiers may come in to play with a few of the games, so players may be delighted to learn that their Barbarian's strength modifier will come in handy when they sit down to arm wrestle a swarthy pirate drunkenly perched at that corner table.

MAKE THEM YOUR OWN

Of course, one of the best aspects of Dungeons and Dragons is simply that it's yours. It's a magical world shared by you and the people at your table, and it's completely different than the group who is playing down the street. I designed these games to be simple, to be fun, and to work well within a dice based system. But if you don't like anything, or think something else would work better, than try it out! Have fun with these games, and I hope they entertain your group for hours. As an aside, sorry if any characters end up wanting to spend more time gambling away their fortunes than slaying monsters!

THANK YOU

Thank you to The Homebrewery for making such an amazingly simple tool to help homebrewed projects look their best. And a very special thanks to the amazing artists who allowed me to use their work in my small passion project!



ARM WRESTLING

A favorite past time across the land, arm wrestling is an easy way for blow-hard tough guys (and gals!) to put their muscles where their mouths are.

NUMBER OF PLAYERS

Two people at a time can arm wrestle, of course, though multiple party members may be partaking in a contest of their own at any given time, this game is easily handled between players, without the input of the Dungeon Master.

GAMEPLAY

Players picture themselves sitting across from one another, ready to do battle, elbows on the table, hands clasped. They then imagine a half circle divided into two quarter circles with three slots to each quarter. To win, a player needs to move his opponent to the third slot of the opponent's quarter circle, which represents pushing his hand down upon the table. The other quarter circle is the players own, which represents how close they themselves have their hand pushed toward the table, the third of which signifies being beaten. It sounds confusing, but players will quickly grasp how this game works, as they begin to play it. Having players actually hold hands in an arm wrestling fashion helps as well. Just remember their rolls are what is important, not their actual strength!

Moving through the slots is dependant on dice rolls. Each of the two players in the contest roll a twenty sided die. They then add their strength modifier to the roll. Whoever rolls highest gets to move his opponent back a slot. The die is then rolled again, and the strength modifier added once more. If the player who won the first roll wins this one, his opponent goes into the second slot, his arm being forced back a bit more. If the player who rolled lowest the first time wins the second roll, the players are put back into the neutral slot. Arms straight up and down, no one with advantage.

WINNING THE GAME

Rolling continues until one player has managed to make his opponent move back three times, thus hitting their hand on the table. To win, you need to win at least three rolls in a row. It could be more than three total die roll wins, if you yourself have been pushed back any slots. This game features a lot of back and forth. Of course, a player may find a hidden reserve of strength and beat their opponent quickly: If any player rolls a natural twenty, they immediately slam their opponents hand down to the tabletop, and win. Likewise, rolling a natural one means your arm buckles, and you are immediately beaten.

BATTLE DICE

Battle Dice is a game that gnomes have been playing for centuries. In recent times, it's become a favorite of tavern goers everywhere. Ever friendly gnomes love introducing it to the strangers they find themselves drinking with.

NUMBER OF PLAYERS

Two people may play Battle Dice at one time, though tables often have more than one game going at once! Bystanders can also place bets on who they think will win each round, or each match.

GAMEPLAY

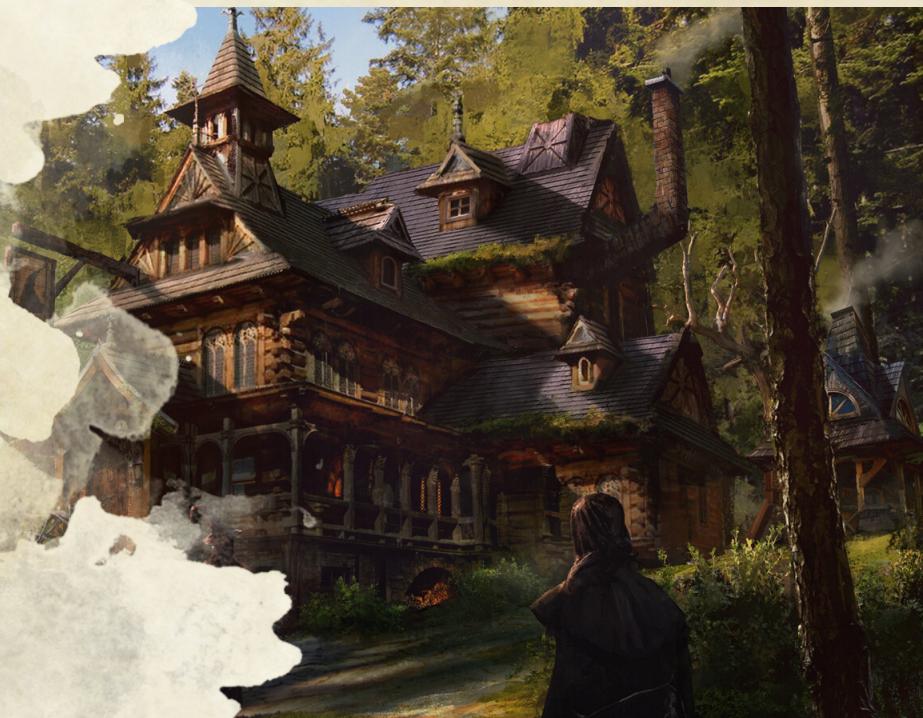
Battle Dice is often played for money. Sitting across from one another, each of the two players will agree on an amount to bet. To begin the game, each player rolls three six sided die at the same time. The players add up their rolled numbers, and whoever has the highest sum has won the round. This player gets to "kill" one of their opponents die. Their opponent discards their die off to the side of the table. Another round then begins, with the last round's winner rolling his three die, but the loser only getting to roll two. Once again, the player who rolls the highest sum will "kill" the die of his opponent. If the players tie, no die is killed.

WINNING THE GAME

Rolling will continue until one player has had all of their die killed. The player with die remaining gains a point, and a new match is started, with each player rolling three six sided die again. Most games are played first to three points.

ALTERATE GAMEPLAY

An alternate game popular among some gnome communities is called Captor Battle Dice. In this version, the winning roller does not "kill" his opponent's dice, but "captures" them instead. The high roller takes one of his opponent's six sided dice and add it to his own roll. So after the first round, the winner will be rolling four die, while the loser rolls two.



BETTER'S DICE

A game popular in more upscale taverns, fortunes can be lost, and won, around a table playing Better's Dice.

NUMBER OF PLAYERS

Better's Dice can handle anywhere from two players, up to however many can squeeze around a table!

GAMEPLAY

One person is chosen at random to be the home die roller. This player takes the home die: a twenty sided die, and rolls it in the center of the gaming table. Then, each player playing pays into the pot. This is an amount agreed upon in the beginning, and high stakes games are often bet upon using only gold pieces. It may be one into the pot to play, it may be five or more.

Once each player interested in playing out a round pays into the pot, the players all roll their own twenty sided die, in an effort to get their roll as close to the home die as possible. Players roll their own die in secret, most tavern games using wooden cups placed upside down upon the table to shield prying eyes.

Once the players have all rolled their die, a round of betting takes place, beginning with the player who rolled the home die. They may add to the pot, or decide to stay their own bet, and the betting turns travel around the table. Each player, in turn, chooses to add to the pot, or stay, or even take themselves out of contention, by withdrawing from further play. Of course, anyone who withdraws a round does so without regaining money already given over to the pot.

After everyone who wishes to stay in has matched whatever the highest raised bet is, any player may then choose to roll a second twenty sided die. Rolling a secondary die costs half the pot, after the first round of betting, and is added to the pot. (Each player wishing to roll a second die pays half the original pot, not half of what the pot is after a previous player adds to it for their second roll.) If a player chooses to pay for a second die, they roll it in secret, and can choose which die to take into the final round of betting: their first roll, or their second.

Betting travels around the table, starting once again with the player who rolled the home die. Once this round of betting is completed, and any player who wishes to contend for the pot has matched all bets, the players reveal their secret rolls.

WINNING THE GAME

Any player who has rolled the exact number shown on the home die wins outright. If more than one player has done so, the players split the pot. If it can not be split evenly, the leftover bet stays in the pot for the next round of rolls.

If no one rolled exact, then whoever is closest to the home die wins. If two players tie, the player who has rolled under the home die wins. For example, if the home die is a four, and one player rolled a three, and the other a five, they are tied. However, the player who rolled the three wins the pot. If two players rolled the same number, and it is not exact to the home die, they then have a roll off. They each roll a twenty sided die, and the highest roll wins the pot. Remember, the only time a pot will be split, is if two or more players roll the exact home die target number.

Games of Better's Dice may often last for hours, with many rounds of rolling and betting. The home die roller switches hands each round, often moving in a circle around the table.

KING'S SUM

A game said to have been invented by King Bruenor Battlehammer in 1358 DR, it spread quickly from Mithral Hall and has become a favorite of gamblers across the Forgotten Realms. Many taverns employ at least one dealer during high traffic evening and night hours.

NUMBER OF PLAYERS

King's Sum can be played by a lone player, with a dealer, or a group of players with a dealer. If no house dealer is employed, a group of gamblers may take turns playing the dealer role.

GAMEPLAY

King's Sum is played with a deck of 80 cards (controlled by rolling a twenty sided die). The numbers one through twenty are each represented four times in this deck, and the dealer deals one card to each player (by rolling the die) and then to themselves. A player wants to land on a twenty, or as close as possible without going over.

For instance, let's say the dealer has one player at their table. The Dungeon Master is controlling the dealer, and rolls a twenty sided die. He rolls a seven, and so the player is dealt a seven card. The DM rolls again, for the dealer's hand, and rolls a ten. The dealer is dealt a ten. The player decides to stay, or hit. Staying means he is dealt no more cards. When hitting, the player is dealt another card. In this case, the player is losing, since he is losing to the dealer. He chooses to hit, and the DM rolls and the player is given a nine. The player is now up to sixteen, which is a decent number when trying to reach twenty. The DM rolls for the dealer, and the dealer is given a nine as well, putting him at nineteen, and forcing the player to hit one more time. This time, the die is rolled and shows a twenty. That's far too much, and the player has lost, and forfeited whatever amount was agreed upon to enter the game. Once all players stop hitting, the dealer must deal to themselves until they either beat every player on the table, or bust. In a game with more than one player, the players take turns being dealt to, with the dealer himself going at the end of each round.

When playing this game, it's important to remember that there are only four types of each card. This won't be an issue in most one or two player games, but with six or more people sitting around the table, it may! The DM should keep track of cards dealt, and if a number is rolled that has been rolled four times already, that roll should be discarded, and redone.

WINNING THE GAME

If a player can land on twenty when adding the sums of the cards that have been dealt, or end closer to twenty than the dealer (who will then keep drawing until they beat the player, or bust.) they win. The first player in a group, or against the dealer, who manages to be at twenty exactly wins, no matter who is yet to go at the table.

RANGER GAME

A game popular with, you guessed it, rangers! This game favors those with high dexterity, and introduces a bit of danger into tavern games.

NUMBER OF PLAYERS

Often a ranger will play this game by themselves, and work on beating their own personal best, but it's not uncommon for two or more rangers, and those who know the game, to come together and compete in turns.

GAMEPLAY

The players press their hand down upon the table or bar, palm down and fingers splayed. Then, taking a knife, dagger, or even an arrow, pointy end down, and begin to stab downward, aiming for the space between their thumb and forefinger. If they successfully miss knicking their own hand, they lift the sharp object and bring it down again, quickly, aiming for the space between their forefinger and middle finger, and they keep going, up and down the space between their fingers.

Mimicing the stabbing between their fingers is done in a game sense by rolling a twenty sided die. To begin, the players roll their die. The first roll is always successful. If the player rolled a one through ten, their next roll must be an eleven through twenty. If they rolled eleven through twenty, their next roll must be a one through ten. Players may use their dexterity modifier to add or subtract from their roll, in an effort to hit their target half of the twenty sided die.

For instance, a ranger with a +5 dexterity modifier rolls a twelve to start the game. Their next roll needs to be on the first half of the die and they roll a nine, which works out fine. They roll again, for their third attempt at landing their knife between their fingers and they roll a seven. This would fail, except they can add their modifier to make the roll an eleven or twelve, which lets them move on. Their next roll is a fourteen, but they can use that modifier to drop their number into the safety range.

WINNING THE GAME

When playing with others there's often betting involved, to see who can successfully keep from cutting their fingers the longest.



RINGERS

Ringers is a common game that is played in the dingiest of dive bars, and the fanciest of hundred room inns. The game is also popular with travellers in the wild, who may embed a rod into trees, wooden fences, or perhaps even rock.

NUMBER OF PLAYERS

Two players may play Ringers at once, though most Inns and Taverns have multiple rods and sets of rings available, so more than one game may be played at any given time.

GAMEPLAY

A metal rod with a ringed hook is driven into the wall, so that the rod sticks upward, and out from the wall. The official rules state the rods must be nine inches long, with a thickness of half an inch in diameter, but it varies from establishment to establishment.

Each player gains posession of three metal rings, about four inches in a diameter. The rings are most commonly brass and copper, three of each, though some players may have their own personal sets which they have painted, and some taverns may paint their rings in the colors of their sign or logo. Each player plays with three of the same rings. (so player A will have brass, and the player B will throw the three copper, so it may be easy to remember who's ring has landed where, and in what order.

Often played for bets on who will win the game, the players decide who will go first on the opening round. This player steps up to the line, which is most commonly measured to be ten feet from the rod, and designated by a small strip of wood that's been nailed to the floor. The player then tosses their ring in an attempt to ring the rod, giving them a point.

Players roll a twenty sided die to see if they have made a successful ring toss. They must hit a thirteen or higher on the roll, and have to add (or subtract) their characters dexterity modifier to see if they were successful. No matter if they ring the rod or not, the next player takes their turn.

The players continue to throw in an alternating fashion, until each player has thrown their three rings. If a player manages to ring the rod multiple times in a row, the rings points are doubled. A ring by itself, or against an opponenet's ring is worth one point. Two rings from one player together is worth four in total, because each ring is now worth two. And a player who lands all three of his rings together, without being interrupted by his opponent, will have nine points in the round. As games are usually played first to nine, this is called a Ringing, and represents a resounding victory.

If each player lands all three of his rings, they will each have three points, since they alternate turns, it means they have also blocked one another from multiplying their scores.

WINNING THE GAME

The first player to nine is the winner in most games of ringers, though the players themselves may agree upon hitting a different target score before the game is begun. When camping down for the night, games to one hundred between adventurers are not uncommon in an effort to fight off the boredom of travel.

SHOTS

A popular game that's simple to play, downing shots in a competitive manner has been the favorite of drunks everywhere!

NUMBER OF PLAYERS

Numerous players may play this, as long as they have the coin to do so!

GAMEPLAY

Sitting around a table, each player has a shotglass before them, and a bottle of liquor at hand. Often with bets being made as the game commences, players pour themselves a shot and down it. Last one upright is the winner!

As each character takes a shot, the players must roll a twenty sided die, and add their constitution modifier to the roll. For the first shot, players simply must avoid rolling a one. This is simply easy to do, since you'll always be adding your constitution modifier.

From there, the game goes on. Another shot, and another roll. This time, the player must roll a two or higher. The next round, it's a three or higher, and so on.

Early rounds should pass easily, but once you hit that ten, eleven, twelve mark, perhaps things get a little harder.

Any player who fails to hit a mark during a round is out of the game. Perhaps they pass out, perhaps they fail to keep their drink down. Have some fun with it!

DMs should also remember that the drinking should effect their players for some time to come. Maybe after playing this game, players will roll with disadvantage on certain rolls for the next two hours. Have some fun with this, as well!

WINNING THE GAME

Be the last person standing! Or sitting! Or awake! Or with the least amount of vomit on your tunic!