PDX OSR

or… Portland Old School Renaissance | Revival

Welcome to PDX OSR, a *community* of folks in Portland, Oregon who, at the most basic level, enjoy playing a variety of Role Playing Games often centered around "**O**ld **S**chool" styled gaming - usually focusing on *Dungeons and Dragons* (D&D) in its various early forms or *similar* roleplaying games either from or inspired by the early play motifs of the era. Though the OSR is often "dungeon game" focused it is foolish to ignore the huge variety of RPGs that capture the essence of early roleplaying products and the development of the hobby. The nature of what "old school" means and what the "**R**" in **OSR** is remains under endless and entertaining debate, largely due to the disconnected forum based nature of the OSR's inception where there was a general response to the "modern" (3rd Edition D&D at the time!) game being forcefully inserted into the state of play in an overly codified manner. Character building and adherence to numerical balance took the fore instead of the gameplay of earlier editions where gameplay focused on exploration, decision making, and roleplay. One cannot do better than point nascent readers towards Matthew Finch's 'A Quick Primer for Old-School Playing' and the four *Zen Moments* within to help unlock the door to the OSR ethos. I paraphrase, but they are…

rulings over rules
player actions over character abilities
heroic, but not super-heroic
no expectations of balance in difficulty

There is a deep and fascinating history of roleplaying game development that is slowly fading into history that fans of old school styled gaming may have grown up with or recently discovered - various good moves and missteps, improvements on design vs heretical overwriting of previously "perfected" expressions of rules - the OSR *encompasses* much of this history but is not *strictly defined* by it. Many still play the *exact* same game they have been playing since its original inception (start date varying by system of choice) with no issues, finding endless ways to share stories at a table with friends using comfortable rules (or lack thereof). Many others explore older systems to interrogate and understand the wisdom of early design attempts, re-formalizing these learnings into a manner of play that suits their taste - taking from here and there what they will to craft their own style of play.

Players introduced to RPGs using modern systems often find a great deal of joy when encountering the OSR, shaking free from the shackles of the monolithic entity todays "D&D" has become where its not only expected but rigidly enforced that there is "one way" to play *the game* with a meta-culture that exists outside of the simple idea of gathering with friends to engage in entertaining roleplay adventure. Some feel that OSR entails only previously released games from a certain era, while some feel that OSR gaming is *the spirit* of the early years. Suffice to say that there are many definitions and interested parties - they all share, at the core, an act of gathering to share a communal fictional hallucination, often using dice to provide random elements to the story.

Fast forward to 2025 where multiple new editions of *Dungeons and Dragons* have come and gone, what is "modern" is a shifting landscape, and the OSR has also spawned the *even more neubulous* New School Renaissance (NSR) that often focuses on extremely *rules light* gameplay and often re-digests and presents new visions of what some in the OSR may consider *sacred cows*… New landscapes beckon to those who dare, etc. Today we live in a *golden age* of games pluralism with a healthy respect for the roots of the hobby without an innate need to universally adhere to specific incarnations of codified systems for roleplaying - *that* is what PDX OSR as a community attempts to engender, if I may be so bold to say so without assuming all folks involved agree in totality.

One important aspect of this mode of being is sharing with others our thoughts, ideas, adventures, scenarios, etc, without expressing them as ground-truth or running afoul of accusing others of having *bad fun* or harboring *wrong think*. This does not mean everyone agrees or that vociferous opinions are not held, but that we accept and encourage exploration of various expressions of "how to play roleplaying games". The early years of the hobby involved a robust zine and amateur press association (APA) culture where various contributors presented part of their vision and engaged in discussion - this is ongoing today in the OSR and NSR scenes, and you hold in your hands just one of many such issuances.

What is old is new, and what is new is old - whatever your preferences for system or setting or style of play, we hope you continue exploring and growing your toolkit as a game-runner or player - hopefully some of the material within will lead you to adventure and new frontiers!