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**Landscape illustration that invites players into this world**

(COULD CONNECT TO THE ART IN THE NEXT PAGE...)



# WELCOME

**D**ead Weight takes place in a low-fantasy world, it's very grim and dark but doesn't take itself too seriously. But be advised that Dead Weight has some horror elements, and may not be suitable for everyone.

The player characters are no heroes; they are dead weights, outcasts and treasure hunters with little to lose. They delve deep into long forsaken places, struggling not only with the horrors that lurk in there, but also their fatigue, stress, and the gradual decay of the few resources they bring. All to save enough silver to leave Blacksalt Island for better days elsewhere.

This system has a strong structure to it, it's roleplay light focusing heavily on dungeon crawl. Roleplay light doesn't mean there's no support for it, quite the contrary, just means that the game system should fun even if your group doesn't like to roleplay a lot.

## Blacksalt Island

This game takes place in Blacksalt Island, and it's a dreadful place. A once-great kingdom, Blacksalt Island has been ruined by famine, war and plague long, long ago. When things were already dire, the dead vigil started, no one knows exactly why, but every single human that dies in the island rises up as a hungry undead. The island was mostly abandoned for many years, but was recently rediscovered. Treasures and arcane relics found in the tombs sparked a "gold rush" of sorts, with people far and wide venturing there to earn some silver.

Now, the island is divided into dungeoneering guilds, each claiming rights to raid certain ruins. They allow adventurers to explore them and even assist them with supplies, as long as they receive a cut of any treasure found.

Blacksalt island is a big place, with multiple cities on the shore, hastily built for this exploration venture and a few villages on its core. Of the original inhabitants very little is left, but some fief and hamlets still date back to the time of the old kings.

The ruins are filled with the undead, and the newcomers seem to only add to their numbers. Humanoid creatures also live there, mostly hid-

den in the shadows and in the forests, like the child stealing goblins and the grotesque gnolls.

Unlike many fantasy worlds your character is no hero. Quite on the contrary, you are someone at the end of their line. Maybe your days of glory are long gone and mostly likely they never came. In one way or another, you don't have much to lose - and that's what brings most people to Blacksalt Island.

You arrived in the island hoping to find something, maybe treasure, maybe some lost artifact, maybe a glorious death.

## What You Will Need

Dead Weight is designed with both online and offline play in mind. This rule book has links and a structure optimized for reading online and on mobile, so it's easily accessible to all players. This game is best played with 4 players but you can play with more or less depending on your play style. The system is also designed to be roleplay light, meaning it will be fun even without heavy roleplaying, but, if you group like to roleplay it also supports that, adding a whole new layer to the game.

For simplicity the rules are broken up in different books:

**Core Rules:** This book, cover all the important rules and basic information on how to play and create characters.

**Bestiary:** A list of monsters and enemies for the adventurers and their respective stats and lore.

**Blacksalt:** A lore guide about the island and the world of Blacksalt, gods, settlements and locations.

**Quick Reference:** A compilation of the most used tables. It's useful to have this open on your phone or on a different tab while playing.

**Sample Dungeon:** Players should NOT read this, only the GM. A sample dungeon for a first adventure.

For online play you will need:

Some voice and text chatting software like Discord or similar.

A robust online dice rolling software that allows rerolling, like Dead Dice a dice rolling app I made just for this system, Dead Dice also automate the player's character sheet.

A virtual tabletop, the simpler the better. I highly recommend Owlbear Rodeo.

A copy of the character sheet for each player, digital or printed, to the player preference.

For playing offline you will need:

Pen and paper for everyone.

A copy of the character sheet for each player, digital or printed, to the player preference. For digital the players may use Dead Dice on their phones.

As many 6-sided dices as you can. Ideally 3 per player. Can be played with fewer dice, but it slows down the game, alternatively the players may use Dead Dice on their phones.

A set of RPG dice with a d4, d6, d8, d10, d12 and d20. These are not used very often, so a mobile app can do the job if you don't have these.

Coins, beans, anything that can be used as tokens. There are 3 types of tokens, stun, shield and dodge.

Miniatures or some kind of pawns. Each player will require one and the GM will require some for the enemies. They should be easily identifiable.

## About

The goal of Dead Weight is to capture the classic feeling of dungeon crawling tabletop RPGs and board games. It is inspired by many others, borrowing a lot from Blades in the Dark, HeroQuest (the board game), Forbidden Lands, Knave, The Black Hack and Torchbearer.

This system open source (<https://github.com/saint11/DeadWeight>) and is released under the Creative Commons Attribution licence, you are free to hack, copy, change and even sell works derivative from this system, as long you give proper attribution. The Dead Weight logo cannot be used without express permission, though.

This game was designed and illustrated by me, Pedro Medeiros.

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# THE BASICS

Let's go over the basics of the system, after that I recommend that you try to create your first character.

## Game Master

One of the players is the game master, in this book we will also abbreviate that to GM. The GM is like a narrator and plays with all the non-player characters, guides the outcomes of the player actions and creates the details of the world.

## Players

Every one else is considered a player. Players will each have a character they will roleplay, they will choose the actions of that character and try to keep them alive and to move towards that characters objectives.

## Adventurers

Characters in Dead Weight are people who either lost everything or didn't ever had anything to begin with. Misfits adventurers willing to risk going into the deep vaults of the Blacksalt Island to find precious treasures and artifacts while risking their lives and their sanity. There are no heroes in Blacksalt Island.

Characters will level up between expeditions and eventually retire, if everything goes well. Characters can also find an untimely end by



something horrible in the depths of the island.

In this book we will often say adventurers when referring specifically to player characters.

## Game Session

This game played in sessions, that can last at least one hour and up to 4 hours, it depends on the play style of your group. Each game session is structured in 2 distinct states, the expedition and the interlude, which is basically delving into a terrible place or recovering and making plans for the next expedition. The players may choose from a list of actions depending on which phase the game currently is. Depending on how much roleplay your group likes the interlude phase may be simplified or not.

## Ok, How Do I Start?

First, decide who will be the game master and who are going to be the players, the game master should ideally read this whole rule book, including the sample dungeon in the end. It is recommended that the players read at least the Core Mechanics after creating the characters, but it's not required. Players should not read the sample dungeon or they will spoil the adventure.

Then each player should create a character, follow the Character Creation chapter for more information.

After that the adventure starts! It is recommended to start on the expedition, with the adventurers right outside the dungeon entrance, choosing how they will enter. If you want you can also start in a village, or city, that's entirely up to you.



# Character Creation

Let's start by creating your character, don't worry too much about the rule system for now, just follow the steps from this chapter and choose what you think sounds more exciting. If you really want to know the rules before doing this, you can skip ahead and come back after you learned the rules.

Every character starts their life with 1 insight point. For now insight points can be used to re-roll one or both dice of a life path roll, some life paths will give you more insight, later in the game insight will be used to level up your character. When playing with a group, if your character has the same life path as another character in your party, you may, only once, roll again without spending insight.

When you complete the last step of your character, you can immediately spend any insight you have left, without even placing it in the character sheet. That is recommended, since you can only earn a limited amount of insight during the whole lifetime of your character. You can see how to spend insight in the playing the game book.

Each step will add and remove attribute points, equipment, and other things to your character. Place them in the appropriate place in your character sheet.

If you get the same skill twice upgrade it instead. Feel free to jump ahead in to the skills, traits and equipment section to understand what they do.

Print a character sheet or use Dead Dice if you want a digital sheet and let's start! Alternatively you can also try the character generator for an automatic character.

Adventurers have 4 main attributes, they are noted in the character sheet:

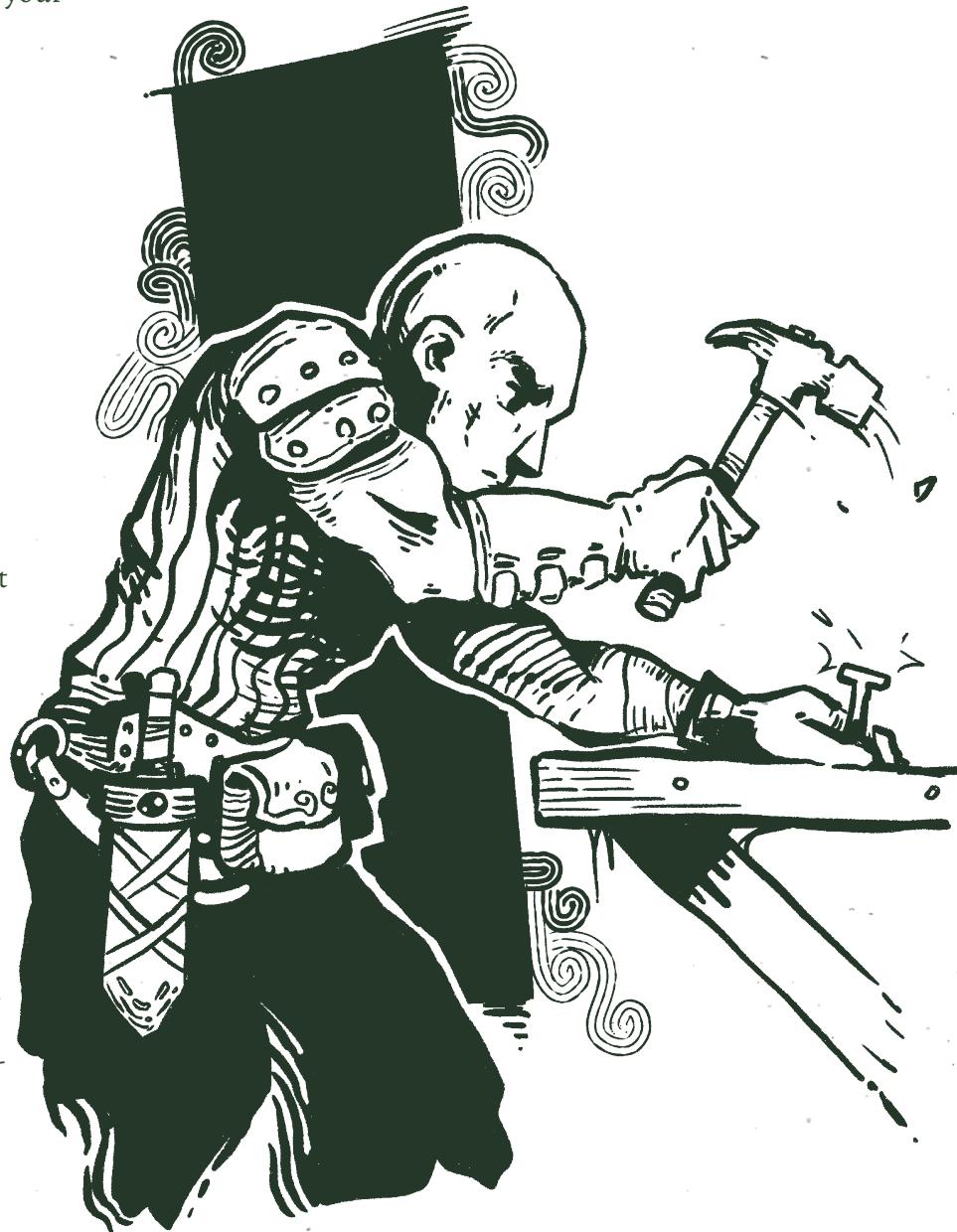
- **Strength (STR)** is physical strength and constitution of a character.
- **Dexterity (DEX)** is how fast and precise a character is.
- **Intelligence (INT)** is how intelligent, wise and keen a character is
- **Presence (PRE)** is how persuasive and strong-willed a character is.

Each attribute has 2 values, the score and the proficiency, the first one is the natural ability and endurance with that attribute, the other one is how trained the adventurer is with that particular field. In the character sheet, the square area is for the score and the circle is for the proficiency.

All attributes scores start at 1, all attribute proficiencies starts at zero.

Attributes scores can not go lower than 0 or higher than 3 at any point of the character creation, ignore any excess points.

Attribute proficiencies can not go lower than 0 or higher than 2 at any point of the character creation, ignore any excess points.



# 1. Roll Your Infancy

Your infancy will provide a base for your attributes and for your formation.

3D6	INFANCY	EFFECT
3	<b>Tossed in the Pit:</b> Rejected by everyone, even by death.	Rejected by death (trait), +1 insight
4	<b>Blacksalt Native:</b> Blacksalt is a terrible place, but you know how it can be good too.	+1 DEX, loremaster (skill)
5	<b>Occultist's Apprentice:</b> Raised by an occultist and trained in the arcane arts since a kid.	+2 INT, +1d6 silver, occult studies (skill)
6	<b>Born in Exile:</b> Raised far away from civilization.	+1 STR +1 INT, survivalist (skill)
7	<b>Battleborn:</b> Born in a army during a raging war, forged in violence.	+2 STR, fearless (skill)
8	<b>Street Urchin:</b> Orphan, raised by other kids.	+1 STR, +1 DEX, street wise (skill)
9	<b>Caravan Child:</b> Born in a trading caravan, before walking you learned to haggle.	+2 PRE, +1d6 silver
10	<b>Clergy Bastard:</b> Born by a sinful union, learned guilt and prayer before walking.	+1 STR +1 PRE, holy rites (skill)
11	<b>City Kid:</b> Grew up amidst the chaos of a big city.	+1 DEX, +1 PRE, +1d4 silver, +1 insight
12	<b>Farmer's Kid:</b> Life in a farm isn't easy, but gave you enough to keep going.	+1 STR, cooking (skill), animal affinity (skill)
13	<b>Lost Family:</b> You had had to grow up much faster than everyone, your siblings depended on you.	+1 INT, +DEX, cooking (skill)
14	<b>Tomb Dweller:</b> Grew up underground in an underground tomb-city. Quickly learned to stay hidden to survive.	+2 DEX, 2d4 silver
15	<b>Seaborn:</b> Born on a ship of travelling merchants.	+1 INT, survivalist (skill), +2d6 silver
16	<b>Feral Kid:</b> Raised by animals in the forest.	+1 STR, +1 DEX, animal affinity (skill)
17	<b>Blue Blood:</b> Born in a rich family that eventually lost everything.	+1 INT, +1 PRE, +4d6 silver
18	<b>Born of a Dark Prophecy:</b> No one knows where you came from, only that it's bad.	+1 of a chosen attribute prof, bad omens (trait)