# The Infinite Dungeon of Abdul Abulbul Amir

The sons of the prophet were valiant and bold,

and quite unaccustomed to fear;

but of all the most reckless

-- or so I am told --

was Abdul Abulbul Amir

You see -- that mad wizard wandered, the hills and the plains

and came to a field open and clear.

He built his deep dungeon

with his own magicked truncheon

the depths of Abdul Abulbul Amir

Soon there came warriors,

to try forth their hand

shouting as they went, ‘au revoir’.

But few returned ever;

for most were not clever,

and we dared not wonder where the rest are.

There were brave folks aplenty, all well known to fame,

who served in the ranks of the Czar.

For by this I imply,

you are going to die.

In the depths of the cavernous scar.

Now pour you a tankard,

and listen to my tale --

a tale of great fortune and cheer.

For tomorrow you'll die

like every other guy

in the dungeon of Abdul Abulbul Amir

## Summary

*The Infinite Dungeon of Abdul Abulbul Amir* is a long-form persistent-world campaign designed for old school style role-playing systems. It will probably not work well in ‘power fantasy’ style systems like *D&D 5e* or similar, but games like *Dungeon Crawl Classics*, *Basic D&D, Dungeon World,* and similar should work well. *Infinite Dungeon* is designed to be played in a drop-in/drop-out style, with any number of adventurers at any time. It is best used with the ‘character funnel’ concept from *DCC*; where each player plays many characters (and at the GMs discretion, multiple parties may be adventuring in the dungeon at the same time). It will be commonplace for characters to die, and it will be commonplace to roll new characters. Part of *Infinite Dungeon* is bound up in that straight dungeon crawl through a random, persistent, infinitely deep dungeon; the other part is located in the outpost town of *Iskavi* a persistent village where the players may invest their hard-won loot to improve the town and gain benefits for future delves into the dungeon.

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## Location and Dramatis Personae

Unlike many games, the world of *Infinite Dungeon* is the same as ours – Earth, sometime in the 18th or 19th century, somewhere in Czarist Russia. Unlike our world, science and technology was stymied by the existence of Magic. Not only do magical races (Elves, Gnomes, Dwarves, Halflings, etc.) exist and interact with the world, but Wizards and Clerics can cast mighty powers given to them through Arcane Study or Divine Intervention. The average technology never passed the late medieval period; though there are some experiments with gunpowder, it’s mostly in the form of fireworks and small bombs. Further, the presence of magic had largely eliminates the old religions of earth, the move toward Monotheism never happened (after all, the gods directly influenced events at the behest of clerics, or so it seemed) so there remains an alternate Pantheon of gods and goddesses governing the different elements and arcana of society. They are largely pastiches of gods from old Greek, Roman, Indian, Chinese, and Slavic cultures, owing to the colossal upheaval that easy travel via teleportation and portals that being able to wield magic allows.

While local culture did, more or less, develop as expected, there was never a colonial drive; and the Americas have yet to be discovered. After all, alchemists could simply turn lead to gold as needed – or to any other element for that matter -- so there was no drive to exploit new lands. Instead, the highly miscible nature and low scarcity of goods, owing to the easy logistics of simple arcane transportation hubs, has led to an era of relative peace. Still, the major powers consolidate through diplomatic alliance, and among the most powerful in the European Sphere (where the game takes place) are the *United Kingdom of Britain, France, and Scandinavia*, the *Grand Federated Nation of Germany the Central States and Ukraine*, and *The Most Glorious and Shining Empire of Russia and the Baltics (but not Ukraine)*. They are respectively ruled by: ”Her Majesty Queen Victoria, Emperor of the United Kingdom of Britain, France, and Scandinavia; Pantheo Defensor; Protector of Ireland and Spain; Duchess of Windsor and Head of the Most Holy Churches of Great Britain.”, “Kaiser Otto von Bismarck, Chancellor of Germany, Duke of Austria, and the Pantheon’s Chosen Representative to the peoples of Europe”, and “Czarina Katherine the Great, Empress of Russia, Queen-regent of the Baltic States, and President of the Academy of Moscow.”

The penchant for long titles never went away.

The *Infinite* *Dungeon* itself resides in western the Russian Empire, somewhere north of the Black Sea along the border between Ukraine and Russia. The town (if it can be called that), Iskavi, is home to only a few small hovels, a Tavern for the adventuring folk, and a Hedge Witch who sells a few poultices and potions (as well as the ever important *Word-of-Recall* spell) to the passing adventurers. Ivan Stravinsky Stravar, the owner of the *Pleasantly Finite Tavern and Inn*, arranges for adventurers to have cheap lodging – on the condition that anything they leave behind is his if they are to die. The Hedge Witch, Matilda, assists in this process by placing a simple life-tracking spell on everyone staying at the *Pleasantly Finite*.

## Adventuring in the *Infinite Dungeon*

The Mad-Wizard Abdul Abulbul Amir built the *Infinite Dungeon* out of insanity, pride, and deep magic. He and his patron daemon-god Azir al-Deraka devised it in a fit of insane cackling and conniving wizardry. The dungeon is, to everyone’s understanding, truly infinite. As of the present day, the deepest anyone has ever delved before returning (only to die shortly after arrival from her grievous wounds), was 32 levels. The levels themselves are more or less persistent in their design, allowing for some mapping to be done, but they are preternaturally huge, and prone to the occasional magical change or alteration. Some may even contain entire pocket universes devised by the Mad-Wizard himself, or stolen from other realities.

Each level of the dungeon is randomly generated one room at a time, using a series of tables and charts specifically designed for the Infinite dungeon. Once generated, the room is entered into a map maintained by the GM, the players are welcome to do the same. Occasionally, effects may occur that change how the dungeon is connected or composed. These random events may alter the room’s features, introduce monsters, present puzzles, or even warp the party to a different part of the dungeon. Each random encounter class is specified by subsequent rolls to determine size of encounter, difficulty, and potential loot.

The most important thing to know about the *Infinite Dungeon* is that it will probably kill you. You will routinely be presented with encounters beyond your call or ken. You may be faced with the Mad Wizard himself (he will randomly appear on a floor, working new magic into the dungeon).

The watchword of *Infinite Dungeon* is randomness. Everything (more or less) is aimed to be driven by tables, die rolls, and the invisible hand of fate. The Mad Wizard lives in the dice, and he cares not for the whims of a lowly adventurer. There is no particular ‘endgame’, but over time you may determine your own. Perhaps you want to build up riches and retire wealthy and kept. Maybe you prefer to adventure and die in glorious battle in the depths. Possibly, though, you’re sinister, and that same spark of madness lives in you. Perhaps you’ll discover the mystery of the Infinite Dungeon, and become a Mad Wizard (or the Dungeon’s new master) yourself.

# How to play

Starting to play *Infinite Dungeon* consists of three main preparatory steps.

1. Choose a system.
2. Prepare the Dungeon (Assistant).
3. Play the Game!

## System Choice

Start by picking a system. As mentioned in the opening summary, *Infinite Dungeon* probably goes best with something in the ‘Old School Revival’ genre. Particularly focused on combat. Fantasy-style systems are good, though you could certainly try out a more ‘modern’ setting if you prefer. Some suggestions (from least to most crunchy, according to the Author’s perception):

### Single Sheet Systems

There are a ton of great single-sheet systems around. *Infinite Dungeon* outright replaces some things in your system of choice, including money, weapons, and monsters – as such, it works really well with these rules-light systems. Note that – your system choice may need some tweaking by your DM to fix monster scaling. The game should be tough, but fair. Make sure that your players don’t suffer from any “Rocks fall and you die” unless they were *really* asking for it.

### Dungeon World

*Dungeon World* is a *“Powered by the Apocalypse”* game in the vein of old-school D&D. It has streamlined mechanics, a simple character generation and leveling system, and is generally a great pile of fun. *Infinite Dungeon* provides some *DW*-specific rules (in particular, GM moves). Again, you may need to tune the system here or there. The tables are designed to be tuned to the players you have, but since *Infinite* is system agnostic, there’s always room to make it fit perfectly.

### Stars Without Number-compatible

Again, while this is a fantasy-ish game, *Sine Nomine’s “Stars without Number”* system (and in particular it’s compatibles) make for a great system. What’s more – if your players find themselves on, say, a TL2 (well, maybe TL2.5ish) planet, maybe there’s a Mad Wizard waiting for them.

### Basic D&D (Moldvay edition)

*Basic* or *Moldvay* are old-school editions of D&D. Known for simple (if somewhat archaic) rules, a focus on treasure gathering, and of course, dungeon delving. *Basic*, like *Dungeon World*, and *Dungeon Crawl Classics,* is one of the three main inspirations for *Infinite Dungeon.* It’s a great fit for the module.

### Dungeon Crawl Classics

*Dungeon Crawl Classics* is, by far, the strongest influence on *Infinite Dungeon*. Indeed, the inspiration for the Mad Wizard himself came from its pages.[[1]](#endnote-1) DCC is an *unfathomably* good game. I can’t recommend it enough. It’s got everything. Rock-hard OSR mechanics, *huge* random tables, fun atmosphere and great design. It’s really one of my favorites.

### Other Games

The author – despite giving it his best effort – hasn’t played every RPG available. Fear not, reader! Many games will work wonderfully with *Infinite Dungeon*. Indeed, any OSR title should work just fine. Games with odd inventory systems or weird health systems might require some hackery, but the answer isn’t to despair, but to innovate! Try it out, hack *Infinite* like the Mad Wizard himself. Use what you can and leave what you can’t (or don’t like). The systems presented in the rest of this are there to be toyed with!

Some games aren’t impossible to make work with *Infinite Dungeon*, but might not be totally in line with its design philosophy. Later editions of *D&D*, *Fate*, *Burning Wheel,* etc – great games all, but they focus on other types of game play, not on the straightforward sword-board-and-bags-of-gold that is *Infinite Dungeon*.

## Prepare the Dungeon

There are two ways to prepare for a session of *Infinite Dungeon*. The first is to do all the rolling, mapping, and other work by hand. To do this, you’ll need a small mountain of d6, a few of the other ‘usual’ RPG die will be needed as well. Most of the game is driven by various Xd6 rolls (where, as I am obligated to explain, ‘XdY’ means ‘roll X Y-sided dice’) and table lookups.

The other way to play embraces the prevalence of modern technology. As long as you don’t mind having a laptop in front of you, there are programs that can help you run the dungeon more efficiently and with less work on your part. They’ll also help keep track of how the dungeon is connected, what rooms look like, what things have been there in the past, and other interesting and useful information.

*Infinite Dungeon* is designed to be a game played in the modern age of the internet. It’s totally appropriate to play *Infinite Dungeon* online or offline, and the game is engineered to work well in either setting, but – in this author’s opinion – *Infinite Dungeon* really shines in online play. The tools keep the system easy to run, letting you (the player or the GM) focus on the moment-to-moment action, rather than the slog of rolling up new rooms and hand-calculating hitpoints.

## Play the Game!

# Playing the Game

## The Basic Flow

The basic procedure for a turn of *Infinite Dungeon* follows three main phases:

1. The Party Decides on an Action
2. The GM details the consequences and effects of the Action
3. The GM updates the game clocks, resolving any consequences from clocks that have completed.

Depending on the party’s current location, different actions (and consequences) will be available. *Infinite Dungeon* also uses a concept called ‘clocks’ to track different parts of gameplay. A primary responsibility of the GM is to know when to add a clock (they are usually consequences of actions, or consequences of other clocks completing. ‘Consequences’ are similar to GM Moves from *Powered by the Apocalypse* games. Where a given action opens up a set of moves for the GM; which they may choose to take. One difference from *PbtA*-style games, is that the details of a consequence are usually determined randomly. Sometimes consequences are silent, the players won’t know what has happened. Some introduce new clocks which can introduce more consequences. However, every action has the “Abandon GM Clock” consequence as a ‘free action’ of sorts for the GM. This action allows the GM to remove a clock and still take a regular action, once per round. This allows them to manage the complexity of the game to fit both their ability (managing a lot of clocks can be hectic) and also the tone of the game. This is especially important as you delve deeper into the dungeon, as the further down you go, the more clocks will start to be generated, and the faster they will fill.

### Actions

### Clocks

A clock is simply a die which is used by the GM or player to track a long-term effect. When an action specifies that you *start a clock*, place a dice of the size indicated in front of you, showing the highest value available. For instance, the action “The Monsters Retreat to the Darkness (d4)” means ‘place a d4 in front of you, with ‘4’ showing.’

Through various mechanics, the GM (or the nature of the clock itself) will tell you to alter the value of the clock. Some decisions depend on the value of a clock (for instance, the level of torchlight is determined by the ‘Torch’ clock, and different effects are more likely if you have more or less torchlight).

Clocks fall into three categories, Automatically Progressing Countdown Clocks (“Automatics”), Semiautomatic Progressing Countdown clocks (“Semiautomatics”), and “Manual Countdown Clocks” (“Manuals”).

Automatics are the simplest kind of clock. Every time the party begins an “Action Phase”, reduce the count of the clock by 1. The GM may instruct you to alter this based on other actions as well, but these clocks tend to represent items of constancy. Whether the length of time your torch will stay lit for, or the time it’ll take you before you get hungry and need to rest.

Semiautomatics are clocks which only count down automatically after being triggered, and may stop counting down. These clocks are used primarily for random, but common events. A semiautomatic clock is used for random encounters, for instance. There are actions the party might take that might result in the clock being ‘paused’ until some other action is taken (for instance, when the party finishes a ‘Word-of-Recall’ to get out of the dungeon, the random encounter clock is *paused*, otherwise it progresses normally, as if it were an automatic clock.)

Manuals are simply clocks which require an action to tick down. They are primarily used by the GM to track events in the dungeon which are inevitable, but unpredictable. Many GM moves state “Advance a Manual clock”, often by an amount more than one. These clocks are used, specifically, to track the movement of the Mad Wizard as he delves through the dungeon, inspecting his creation. Pray to the Gods, dear adventurer, pray you never find out what happens when you meet him.

Some Clocks may be “Randomly Seeded”, these are clocks with start at a random value. Torchclocks, for instance, start at `d6 + quality`, where ‘quality’ is the quality level of the torch you bought. If you bought relatively low quality torches (say, `+4`), then you might have as few as `5` rounds before your torch goes out. A high quality lantern, however, might last far more rounds.

### The Chart

### Walking through a turn

### Building Rooms and Hallways

### Treasure and Experience

Because *Infinite Dungeon* is a system-agnostic game, giving you exact details for treasure and experience will be difficult. It’s up to you to decide what is appropriate depending on your system. However, what *Infinite Dungeon* can do is give you some guidelines in a generic sense for a number of different monsters and encounter types. If you want to whole-sale replace your Treasure and Experience system, go for it, for games that wouldn’t really support that (*Torchbearer* comes to mind), you can use this as a guide for mapping rewards.

## In Town

### The Tavern

### The Hedge-Witch

### Cost of living, Improvements, and Maintenance

## In the Dungeon

### Doing things by hand

#### Generating Rooms

#### Random Encounters and Events Random Loot

### Doing things with the Assistant

#### Generating Rooms

#### Random Encounters and Events Random Loot

1. The Core Rulebook from 2012, page 117. Shows a Wizard as he gains more corruption. The bottom-center and bottom-right wizards in particular, are *exactly* what inspired me to start on *Infinite Dungeon*. Even if you never play *DCC*, go buy the core book, stare at the art. It’s wonderful and beautiful. While staring, gather friends, play the game. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)