Overview

From The Unofficial POWDER Wiki

This page is for those who have randomly stumbled across this Wiki, or who are somehow still confused about the game.

POWDER is a "roguelike" game written by Jeff Lait (a physicist by day), and freely available (including source) from its official homepage (https://web.archive.org/web/20190805004006/http://www.zincland.com/powder/index.php) . This particular game is awesomely cross-platform. While it began its life on the Game Boy Advance, it has also been ported to Windows (regular and CE), Linux (regular and PS3), Mac, Nintendo DS, Playstation, GP2X, Wii, and most recently, the iPhone.

In most respects, this game is much like other roguelikes -- you (represented by the "avatar" in the middle of the screen) start off with some basic equipment, and with this you explore a dungeon, slaughtering the inhabitants, eating their corpses, and taking their stuff. Your ultimate goal is to get down to level 25, kill the arch-daemon known as Baezl'bub (also known as He Whose Name Cannot Be Spelled Correctly), and bring his heart back to the surface world. POWDER is, as usual, turn-based -- before making any move, you can take all the time you want to examine your environment and/or your inventory, so long as you don't do anything which requires an actual turn, such as moving, spell-casting, attacking, or praying.

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Stats and Classes

In some ways, POWDER is simpler than other roguelikes: There are no "characteristics" such as Strength or Intelligence; the basic types of magic items are fewer than in some other games; skills are a little simpler -- you either have a skill, or you don't. However, you'll find that the simple elements can combine in many interesting ways -- feel free to browse this Wiki for some examples. POWDER combines elements of both level and skill based games, and both are needed to succeed. POWDER also includes a set of deities; some of these will be helpful, but others will be taking pot-shots at you throughout the game. All of them are judging you (especially the one you're worshiping), and there's no way to keep all of them happy. Your challenge is to survive the gods as well as the monsters.... The gods also provide a weak "class" system: you can switch gods more-or-less freely at each level gain, and both your benefits and your restrictions with each god, represent one of the classic RPG classes such as "fighter" or "wizard".

Progression

The main measures of your character's progress are your "physical dice" (also called "hit dice"), and "magic dice". Loosely linked to these, are your maximums for Hit Points (how much damage you can take) and Mana Points (how much magic you can cast). These get increased when you gain levels (every 1000 experience points). How much each of them increase will depend on which deity you choose to follow at each level gain. Your choice of god will also affect how many "slots" you gain for skills and spells, which provide important abilities and resources. (In particular, weapons and armor will be *much* more effective after you've learned some of their associated skills.) The deities stand in for the "character classes" found in other games, but in POWDER, you can mix the classes more-or-less freely.

Physical and Mana dice are never lost permanently (body-swaps notwithstanding). Your maximum hit points can be permanently increased by drinking Heal Potions when at full HP, or reduced by System Shock. Your maximum Mana will never decrease, but can be increased by drinking Mana Potions (again, while at full mana), or by eating certain corpses. Skills and spells are gained either from the gods, or from books found in the dungeon (you start out with a couple of books). Skills and spells can only be forgotten by your own choice, usually to free up slots for more desirable acquisitions.

Your "experience level", as such, doesn't factor into combat or spell use, and is not even displayed on the screen. It does have a few effects: It's used to figure your experience gain for killing monsters (reducing it as you gain levels), in figuring your final score, and when a god punishes you with a summons.

It is possible to polymorph into or possess another monster, and in either case you leave not only your dice, HP, and mana behind, but your skills and spells as well. Fortunately, such excursions are generally temporary.

The selection of monsters produced will depend on the current "threat level", which is the sum of the current dungeon level, and both your physical and magic dice. Some monsters can appear with their predefined rooms, which can provide special challenges along with treasure. Unless you're descending at breakneck pace, your own dice will quickly dominate, so retreating to upper levels doesn't get you too much of a break. There does come a point in the late game where you can kill pretty much any one monster you encounter... but at that point, there will be more of them! Similarly, besides the normal run of monsters, you will see more powerful "unique" monsters, often as "leaders". Unique monsters get random extra intrinsics, which can make them unexpectedly dangerous. A leader's presence prevents turning their followers against each other, even under "friendly fire".

The Map

Most levels are generated randomly, but with a variety of styles. Any level can include set pieces, but the bottom-most levels are increasingly predefined as "challenge maps". Besides the obvious corridor and room floors, walls, and doors (including secret doors), you will find many hazards:

- Assorted traps, many of them hidden.
- Forest, which can hide monsters (or the player), and can be set afire.
- Ice, which doesn't harm you directly, but can be melted into water, perhaps unexpectedly.
- Water, which can drown you (and can be frozen into ice, possibly trapping you).
- Lava, which will both burn you directly and set you afire (and can also drown you)
- Acid pools, which will dissolve (and also drown) you.
- Various noxious vapors drifting around the map.

Other points

- There is no "money" in this game -- no coins, jewels, or shops. All treasure is in the form of equipment, much of which you'll need to identify before you can safely use it. There are also no chests or boxes, but there *are* hidden treasure rooms.
- There is a hunger system, but you can't simply starve to death. However, when you get hungry, you stop healing, and *that* can easily get you killed. The only food

in the dungeon is what you create, either by killing monsters or using an advanced spell. Eating corpses can get you various magical benefits, but some corpses are dangerous.

- Many magical effects take the form of intrinsics, which can be provided by items, by a monster's nature, or temporarily by diet, magic, or divine intervention.
- While there are "standard" magic items, there are also unique items called artifacts, which offer random intrinsics or combinations thereof. These can be very useful, or dangerous even to pick up. There are also "elemental weapons" which are created by the player.

Commands

From The Unofficial POWDER Wiki

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Menu commands

The key listed in brackets in each definition allows you to perform the action without opening the menu (using [V]). If it is not part of a word, it will be explicitly stated. The word that it is part of can be used to memorize the command, which makes the task of memorizing the multitude of commands much less daunting. The keypresses are CASE SENSITIVE.

Cancel

The [esc] key is used to cancel many actions or close the current open menu.

Climb

This command is used to [c]limb up or down stairs, to navigate between floors. It can also be used to climb a tree, climb in or out of a trap, and swim up and down in water, acid or lava. Use [<] to climb up or [>] to climb down without opening the menu.

Search

Will [s]earch the area, attempting to reveal any hidden doors or traps in the adjacent squares. This command takes a round of gameplay. In most cases, you will have to use this action several times before discovering the secret. As of version 114, you get a status message when searching, providing a bit of feedback.

Zap

Attempts to cast ([z]ap) a spell.

Fire

Will [f]ire a quivered item.

Jump

[J]umps if you have the ability. Otherwise it will display "You cannot jump very far." If you try to jump to a square you cannot see, you'll get "You balk at the leap!"

Look

Allows you to look around and e[x]amine monsters/objects. Does not take any game time.

Wait

Skips a turn, allowing you to [w]ait in place for a single round of gameplay. This command can be useful for resting, or letting a monster come to you. You can also use the [.] or [5] keys for this purpose.

Pick Up

Collects ([g]ets) an item at your feet, and places it into your inventory, provided you have a free space. If there is more than one object, a menu appears to select which one to pick up. Picking an object up takes one turn. If there are no objects, it will display, "You grope on the floor foolishly!" (but will not take any time). You can also use the [,] key for this purpose.

Eat

Picks up and [e]ats an object from the floor. If you are full, it will be left in your inventory.

Open

Will [o]pen a door. You must specify the direction when opening the door. This is useful when your polymorphed form does not automatically open doors by moving into them.

Close

Will [c]lose a door. You must specify the direction when closing the door. This is useful for escaping dangerous monsters, though beware that some enemies can open doors. It can also be used to shut yourself inside a room while you rest.

Breathe

[B]reathes in a direction, including up or down. This is only useful when you are polymorphed into a dragon. Note that using a breath weapon will tire you out for 1d4+1 turns.

Wish

The wish command is a powerful one, but is only available to those who know the secret password to activate wizard mode. This code can only be obtained through a small donation to *Jeff Lait*. Currently, This command allows you to wish for items by type, specific magic items, monsters, spells, skills, experience, befriending Gods, level teleporting, and to create a prefabricated room. If wizard mode is not activated, then it will just display a random message. This command is activated by pressing [&]

Release

[q] Ends your possession of a monster (or Wizard's Eye). Best done *before* your possessed body gets killed!

Command

[C]ommands pets from a list of visible ones, or "all" visible pets. After choosing a pet, three options are available: "Kill...", "Guard me", and "Stay". "Kill..." allows for a target to be chosen.

Name

Can be used to set a custom [N]ame on monsters or yourself.

Swap

[S]waps places with an allied, friendly, or neutral monster.

Sleep

Puts you to sleep for (up to) 50 turns, allowing you to [R]est. It gives you the Asleep intrinsic, allowing you to restore hit points. It's good when you are able to hide yourself, as it is much quicker then just waiting for your health to recover; however, it is more dangerous, as it leaves you open to attacks.

Forget

Allows you to [F]orget a skill, removing it from your memorized abilities and spells (and thus grants you an additional skill or spell slot). This is useful for forgetting unwanted skills and spells (which may have been granted by your god). You will not be able to forget a skill or spell if you have another skill or spell which depends on it.

Move

[W]alks in one of 8 directions. You can only walk diagonally if you are in the barbarian outfit, or polymorphed into a grid bug. Otherwise, diagonals give the message, "You cannot move in this fashion."

SafeWalk

If you hold the [ctrl] key while walking, you will not automatically fight creatures that you bump into. (But see the Safewalk Option, below, which reverses this.)

Run

[r]unning will make your you move in the given direction until you reach a dead end, a choice of paths, or a non-tame monster. You cannot run if you are next to a non-tame monster. Taking damage from any source will also end your run.

MiniMap

Your [m]inimap can be opened using the [m] key or the [X] key.

History

Pressing [p] will scroll through previous event messages.

Pray

Praying opens up the list of [deities], allowing you to check your disposition. This is done by pressing the [_] key. Praying gets no direct response from any deity, but it does use a game turn.

Options

In the [O]ptions screen, you can get help, adjust various settings, check your known-items list, dump your character data to a file, or save (and optionally quit) your game. Possibly the single most useful option is Safewalk -- with this set, you will not automatically attack a neutral creature by moving into them (instead, you will neither move, nor lose the turn). With Safewalk activated, moving with the control key pressed *will* attack neutral or friendly creatures.

Inventory

Opens your [i]nventory, allowing you to review or use one of your possessions or equip your character. (See the inventory commands, below)

Command menu

This offers all of the above commands as a menu. It is invoked with the [V] key.

Inventory commands

Zap

Zaps a wand at the selected square.

Read

Causes you to read a book or scroll.

Equip

Equips the selected item in your inventory.

Unequip

Attempts to remove the selected piece of equipment from a body location. If the item is "evil", it cannot be removed. You must have a free space in your inventory.

Drop

Drops the selected item to the ground at your feet.

Eat

Allows you to consume any edible item, usually corpses or potions. Eating corpses will prevent starvation, but also carries a chance of passing along any intrinsics that the creature had. Drinking a potion will gain its effects. For more information, see the Food and Potions sections. Cannot be done if you are currently Full.

Dip

After selecting the dip [!] command, you can choose a potion to dip the selected item into. Doing so can have good, bad, or no effects depending on the potion and the dipped item.

Examine

E[x]amining an item will display the encyclopedia entry on that item type, as well as displaying any information about the item that you might have learned. Keep in mind that until an item (or at least its type) is identified, you'll receive almost no information about that item.

Quiver

Toggles the [q]uiver flag on an inventory item. When you use the fire command from the main command list, it will search your inventory for any quivered items, and automatically throw one of them. Quivered items will also be picked up automatically (and instantly) when you walk over them, instead of prompting you to pick them up.

Throw

Lets you [t]hrow an item in any direction. Besides weapons, potions can also be thrown at monsters, and throwing other items is occasionally useful.

Sort

The [s]ort command will organize your inventory screen. Identical items will be "stacked" into a single slot. Items will also be arranged in order by type. "Favorite" items will be moved to the start of your inventory. "Identical" here includes both known and unknown characteristics, as well as the ID status itself. Exception: Corpses (including statues) do not stack, even if apparently identical.

Split

This action is available on stacked items. It will remove one item from the stack, and put it in a separate inventory slot.

Name item

Can be used to set a custom [N]ame on items in your inventory. This can be a useful trick for items you've managed to identify without the game flagging them as identified, such as a Ring of Fire Resistance or similar item. You can name a "Specific" item (or stack), or a "Type" of item.

Favorite

[f]avorite highlights an item with a yellow border. When the Sort command is used, these items will be placed first (unless they are equipped).

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