**The Basics**

**Diablo II and it’s Expansion**

Diablo II's storyline progresses through four chapters or "Acts". Each act follows a more or less predetermined path, although there is some random-level generation in wilderness areas and dungeons between key cities. The player progresses through the story by completing a series of quests within each act, while there are also optional side dungeons for extra monsters and experience.

In contrast to the first Diablo, whose levels consisted of descending deeper and deeper into a Gothic-themed dungeon and Hell, Diablo II's environments are much more varied. Act I is similar to the original Diablo; the Rogue Encampment is a simple palisade fort, while plains and forests making up the wilderness area, and the Monastery resembles the typical Middle Ages fortress. Act II mimics Ancient Egypt's desert and tombs; Lut Gholein resembles a Middle Eastern city and palace during the Crusades. Act III is supposedly based on the Central American jungles; Kurast is inspired by the lost Maya civilization. Act IV takes place in Hell and is the shortest, with just three quests compared to the other Acts that have six.

The Lord of Destruction expansion adds the fifth chapter Act V which continues the story where Act IV left off. Act V's style is mainly mountainous as the player ascends Mount Arreat, with alpine plateaus and ice tunnels/caverns, as well as hellish subterranean pits (reminiscent of Hell in Act IV) for extra monsters and experience. After reaching the summit of Arreat, the player gains access to the Worldstone Keep (whose architecture may be reminiscent of Angkor Wat and other Hindu temples)

In addition to the acts, there are three sequential difficulty levels: Normal, Nightmare, and Hell; completing the game (four Acts in the original or five Acts in the expansion) on a difficulty setting will open up the next level. On higher difficulties, monsters are stronger and may be resistant or immune to an element or physical damage, experience is penalized on dying, and the player's resistances are handicapped. However, better items are rewarded to players as they go through higher difficulties. A character retains all abilities and items between difficulties, and may return to a lower difficulty at any time.

Players can create a hardcore character. In normal mode, the player can resurrect their character if killed and resume playing, while a hardcore character has only one life. If killed, the character is permanently dead and unplayable, and all items and equipment on that character will be lost unless another friendly character has the "loot" icon checked.