

# Dungeons and Dragons: Fellowship of Heroes

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*“The secret we should never let the gamemasters know is that they don't need any rules.”*

- Gary Gygax, co-creator of D&D

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# Executive Summary

**Fellowship of Heroes** is tabletop, fantasy, role-playing game based on the *Dungeons & Dragons* universe where a group of 2-6 players (plus a dungeon master) take on the roles of adventurers who must face a challenging campaign full of unexpected quests and mighty enemies, whilst getting a foothold on the dangerous island of Skalus by building a settlement they can call their own.

Aside from the typical dungeon-crawling gameplay, the party of players are expected to develop their base camp by building structures with different benefits, upgrading them, defending them from enemies, selling excess materials and convincing characters they meet along the way to join their settlement.

We aim to allow the group of players to experience first-hand what it means to build a thriving, living community inside an immersive fictional world, complemented by gameplay mechanisms that hook the players and motivate long-term investment.

Aside from the present document, we also refer to the other supporting documents developed:

- The story guide, *A Ride to Skalus*, the main tool of the *Dungeon Master*;
- The *Ruleset*, which holds the main rules and auxiliary tables for the base-building content of the game;
- The *Settlement Sheet*, which allows the players to keep track of structures built and upgrades implemented in their settlement;
- The *Character Sheets*, which have all the information related to three different playable characters (although player can bring their own characters);
- A *Gameplay Video*, which demonstrates the most important gameplay mechanisms and how to use the previously mentioned documents.

# Game Overview

## Section 1 - Genre and Targets

### Genre

**Fellowship of Heroes** stands as a fantasy role-playing game with dungeon-crawling, base-building and resource management elements.

### Target Audience

Our target audience covers a range of different player types, classified according to the **DGD1** model (Demographic Game Design 1), which takes into account necessities related to progression, narrative and social interaction. Having said this, we seek to target the following player-types:

- Creative players seeking a non-linear, open-ended, fantasy adventure campaign with a multitude of interactable characters - **Dedicated/Harcore Wanderers**;
- Casual enjoyers of base building and resource management who look for a stable progression system and multiple paths of achieving player-defined settlement goals - **Casual Managers**;
- Players who thrive on in-game and real-world group collaboration and social interactions, being able to make impactful changes to the game world and the development of its story - **Dedicated/Hardcore and Casual Participants**;

Considering on the other hand the more recent and complete **BrainHex** model (with roots in the **DGD1** model) we can highlight the following player-types: **Seekers**, **Socializers** and **Masterminds**. Only the combination of these main classes makes up about 17% of players.



Some sub-classes: Seeker-Masterminds, Seeker-Socializers and Mastermind-Seekers

### Target Platform

**Fellowship of Heroes** is a board game which utilizes tabletop physical elements like miniatures and maps as well as supporting documents to convey the story and gameplay.

## Section 2 - Concept, Theme and Goals

### Game Concept

In a fantasy world, a group of adventurers (aka, the players) get ready to face unexpected and dangerous challenges, all the while deciding to start their own safe-haven to gain a foothold in the savage island of Skalus!

By exploring the land and gathering resources, the players will be able to build and expand their settlement, which in turn can be inhabited by interesting characters they meet along the way, thus developing a community which they can fully interact with.

The settlement will produce valuable resources that, on one hand, can be sold or reinvested into further improvements, which may require structure-related quests. On the other hand, the ever-growing base camp is likely to attract unwanted attention from greedy enemies and ravaging beasts... Will the team of heroes be able to defend their home from these attacks?

### Theme

The theme of **Fellowship of Heroes** revolves around the concept of **community and belonging**:

*"If you want to go quickly, go alone. If you want to go far, go together."*  
- African proverb

To support and explore this theme - also translated as one of our main design goals -, players take the perspective of adventurers who establish a settlement in a harsh environment and help it grow from a simple base camp to a thriving community filled with friends they made along their journeys.

That being said, the settlement the players build, alongside the characters they recruit, are the cornerstones of our game and the favoured ways of conveying a sense of community.

### Design Goals

**Open-Ended Gameplay** - We offer players a high degree of freedom as to where and how they develop their base camp, how they populate it and how they manage their resources, in accordance with the overall feel of *Dungeons & Dragons*;

**Sense of Community** - Throughout their adventures, players will meet diverse characters with different skills that they can convince to join their settlement, thus building a dynamic community and promoting a sense of interaction and collaboration;

**Long-Term Progression** - The progression of the game will not only be evaluated in terms of short-term player progression - levelling up and gaining new equipment -, but also through the expansion of the settlement built, which represents a long-term investment and achievement for the players;

**Interweaving Story with Gameplay** - The base camp is the central stage to multiple random events that offer a sense of urgency and unpredictability to the gameplay. Moreover, building unique structures can provide quests which, once completed, further improve the settlement through bonuses, seamlessly interweaving story with gameplay.

## Section 3 - What's Unique?

In order to distinguish what **Fellowship of Heroes** does so differently, we must firstly consider the current market and the games which, in some way, represent our competitors.

Regarding the role-playing and dungeon-crawling aspect of our gameplay, we may consider tabletop games like *Gloomhaven* and *Descent: Legends of the Dark*, as well as many others.

However, it is especially difficult to identify games with base-building and resource management aspects associated with a campaign structure. One can point out *Dead of Winter*, for example, but then again this game is played in short sessions.

## Unique Selling Points

Taking this into consideration, we can proceed by listing our main unique selling points:

- The **creation of an interactable in-game community you can call your own** - building it from the ground-up, persuading (or trying to persuade) any characters to join it and establishing relationships with fellow settlers;
- Players are able leave a **tangible and permanent mark on a fantasy world and its story** through the development of their settlement - they won't be limited to inconsequential feats;
- **Management and trading of resources in a long-term game** (that relies on multiple sessions/a campaign), which promotes forward-thinking and taps into the business side of adventuring.

## Highlights

**Fellowship of Heroes** shines when players interact with their base camp and the characters they have recruited. We aim to create moments like the following:

*“While walking through a small village, one of the players encountered an astounding dwarven blacksmith, whose skills would undoubtedly bring a fine addition to the group’s settlement… However, like most dwarfs, this blacksmith is quite the stubborn type, making the players fear they may not be able to persuade him to join them. They bring their most charismatic character forward, roll for a persuasion check and hope for the luckiest throw of the die… Huzzah, success! Through moans and mumbling, the dwarf accepts your offer…*

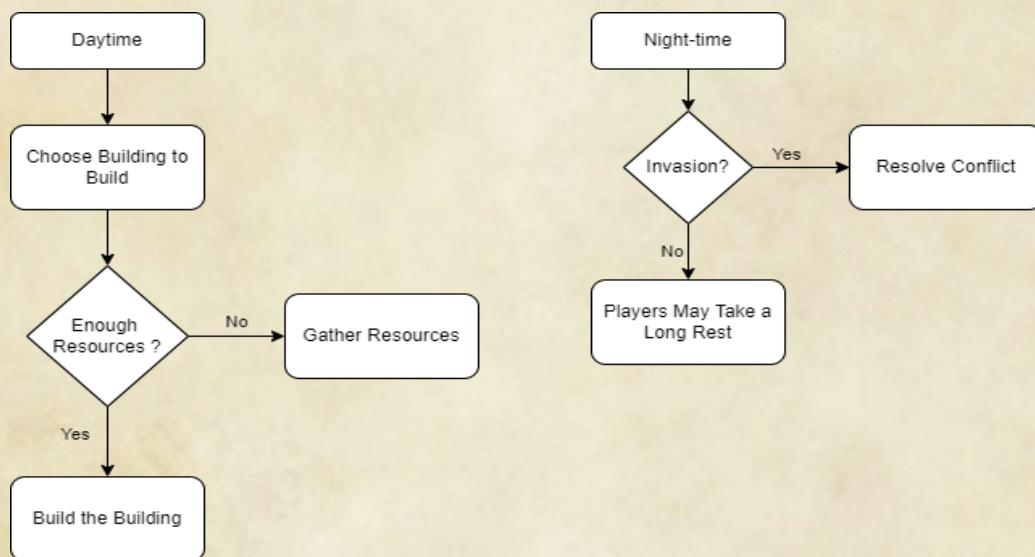
*Later on in the campaign, the blacksmith, who the players have since helped and chatted with multiple times, forges a gift for the players: an epic spear, without which they could have never defeated the hungry troll lurking around the land.”*

Having these types of unexpected encounters and interactions with characters that you can revisit and make a part of your settlement cause a deeply rewarding feeling amongst the players, unique to **Fellowship of Heroes**.

## Section 4 - Gameplay

### Core Gameplay Loop

Due to the high level of player freedom of the game, it's hard to define a gameplay loop that will encapsulate all possible cases of interaction within the game. With that in mind, the following image presents a high-level view of possible action sequences the players may take in two distinct phases: daytime and night-time.



It's important to highlight different aspects of the loop presented:

- Players may gather resources in different ways, by building production buildings, by buying them directly from a shop or by acquiring them as rewards during their adventures;
- During conflict resolution of invasion events, players will take control of their characters and any available NPC's the settlement may have, and try to keep the enemies from damaging their buildings and stealing their resources. The success rate of these actions is unpredictable and must be dealt with by the Dungeon Master.
- The images presented above don't include settlement specific quests that may appear during gameplay (such as the quest to build the temple) since those events are more sparse throughout the session.

Overall, the gameplay loop can be summarised by a sentence from our player motivation text (**Section 5 - The Experience**):

*“Slay, gather, defend, build! Lead by example your **Fellowship of Heroes!**”*

## Hook

The main hook of the expansion is that it allows the players to leave their mark on the world they inhabit by building their custom settlement and populating it with their favorite NPCs, all the while providing custom events to make the base building component of the game more dynamic.

## Key Features

- **Fellowship of Heroes** is an expansion to the base game *Dungeons & Dragons (5th Edition)*;
- The expansion is a base-building game with role-playing and action-adventure features that 2-6 players can play (hereinafter referred to as “the party”);
- The players start with a small base with a number of tents equal to the number of player characters;
- The players gather resources by exploring dungeons, going on expeditions, or building specific production buildings;
- There are different types of buildings with varying effects that the players can build to improve their base;

- As they go on adventures the players meet characters that may join their camp and help them progress;
- During the night, the players may be attacked by invasions that will test their might;
- Similarly to the base game, the expansion has a Dungeon Master, that will control NPCs and deal with the consequences of the player's actions;

## Section 5 - The Experience

**Fellowship of Heroes**, like most role-playing games, heavily relies on the experience it manages to create for the players. In fact, the progression of the experience itself, accompanied by the evolution of the base camp - from a disorganized, struggling camp to a thriving settlement filled with life - is the basis of our game.

### Player Motivation

To incite our players, the following player motivation is presented:

*“Explore challenging dungeons, complete dangerous quests and face insurmountable odds with your ragtag team of adventurers, all the while gathering precious resources to build and expand your home away from home - your very own settlement!*

*Plan an ever-growing community by constructing buildings with different functions and hiring skilled hunters, blacksmiths and much more. Manage their resource production and turn a profit by sending your traders to sell extra materials to nearby towns. Convince other characters to join your ambitious camp and take advantage of the bonuses they bring.*

*But beware: no place is ever safe in the Island of Skalus! Fight off packs of wolves that threaten your food stocks, build defensive fortifications to fend off greedy goblin attacks and heed any sign of trouble brewing amidst your fellow residents...*

*Slay, gather, defend, build! Lead by example your **Fellowship of Heroes!**”*

As seen above, the motivation focuses mainly on the importance and emotional weight of the settlement built by the players, hopefully becoming “something of their own”, **their community of adventurers and heroes**.

## Experience

This expansion was created because in most *Dungeons & Dragons* campaigns, the players' characters, despite each of them having a personal and separate story, don't really belong to a specific place (be it abstract or not). They are always on the move, leaving behind acquaintances and friends alike, rarely returning to them. This changes in **Fellowship of Heroes**, with the introduction of the buildable settlement.

After the settlement is set up, the party will have a place they can call home and manage as they see fit. Players will be able to meet again and interact with certain NPCs that they took a liking to and were convinced to join their settlement. Also by being able to decide what goes into the settlement, the players can create a central hub with whatever stores and supplies they need, thus supporting their more dangerous quests.

All in all, the experience aims to be aligned with the defined theme of the game - **community and belonging**.

It's important to note the Dungeon Master (*DM*) has a relevant influence over the players' experience, just like in the base game of *Dungeons & Dragons* - their dedication to the players' experience can make or break the overall feeling of **Fellowship of Heroes**. That being said, if players desire more social interaction, then the *DM* must account for this and create more spontaneous instances where the settlers directly look for and chat with the players. On the other hand, if the party is more focused on the management aspect of having a community, the *DM* should consider this and more frequently give players the freedom to interact with the settlement's buildings. This, of course, highly depends on the player types currently playing the campaign (**Section 1 - Genre and Targets**).

Considering this, the final *DM/story* guide would have optional dialogues and even spontaneous quests given by NPCs if they were to join the settlement, for example.

## Progression

**Fellowship of Heroes** was created to fit the slower pace of the base game, *Dungeons & Dragons*, which is often played over the course of multiple sessions. The progression of the game is, therefore, slow-paced but ultimately rewarding in the long run.

The overall **experience progression** for the players is deeply rooted in the improvement of the party's settlement, which in turn grows in parallel with the party's skills.

At first, the settlement starts with the bare minimum to survive and players will struggle to gather enough resources to construct the first few structures while maintaining their base camp safe from nightly invasions. The settlement also starts with no NPCs, so **the sense of community and belonging is far from being reached - the players are alone in the hostile world.**

However, as the party advances in the campaign by completing the first quests, they meet new characters and find diverse ways of getting necessary resources. There is a sudden kickstart to the settlement - structures are easier to build, characters roam around and give life to the base camp, resources start being superfluous and are sold to be turned into profit, bonuses further promote development... Despite this, waiting several in-game days to complete a building or making the players go on multiple sessions-long quests to gather materials to make new structures gives the feeling that the development of the settlement is a living and breathing thing, fortifying the players' immersion. With the added success, the nightly invasions also increase in danger, damaging buildings and delaying the overall progress of the settlement, although the party now feels more competent to deal with these events, especially with the help of defensive structures and NPCs alike. **The settlement not only survives, it is starting to thrive! A sense of community builds up as more and more interesting characters emerge and join the players.**

Finally, as the campaign draws to a close, bigger, higher tier structures enter the scope of the party - these expensive buildings make the players think carefully about how they want to develop the settlement since the progression may take more time if they commit mistakes earlier on. The party reaps the huge benefits of all the investments they worked on, growing richer and more powerful alongside their make-shift family of heroes and characters they met along the way. The nightly invasions offer rough challenges, but are mostly faced with confidence. The players can proudly look back at what they have accomplished and stand as the **leaders of a strong community**, ready to face the hostile world together. **They have successfully built their very own Fellowship of Heroes!**

Lastly, one should note that, considering the open-endedness we aim for, some quests and buildings are completely optional and don't necessarily belong to the natural progression of the game.

## Section 6 - Player Interaction

### Player Control

Each of the **players will always be in control of a fantasy character**, whose stats can be consulted in the corresponding *Character Sheet* (exemplified at the 50 seconds mark of the gameplay video). These characters are played exactly like in *Dungeons & Dragons*.

However, during specific events they will additionally **control NPCs** who are associated with some of the settlement's defensive structures and are capable of engaging in battle (in terms of fiction, this can be interpreted as players ordering the NPCs what to do). As a specific example of this, the Outpost building will allow the players to deploy certain NPCs who can be controlled during invasions. The stats of these NPCs can be consulted in *Appendix B: Player Handouts* of the story guide, *A Ride to Skalus* (exemplified at the 4:18 minute mark of the gameplay video).

In addition to controlling these characters, the players will be responsible for all decisions related to their settlement, such as which buildings to build, where to place them and how to manage the camp's resources (see *Settlement Sheet*, exemplified at the 3:34 minute mark of the gameplay video). In this manner, the players also take a broader perspective and possess a less limited control over the fantasy world. A suggestion for integrating this behaviour into the fiction is that the party appoints a settlement leader who oversees construction and resource management. This leader is the same character who, through the Message Post building, communicates with the party over long distances.

### Interface and Interaction Metaphor

Similarly to the base game *Dungeons & Dragons*, most of the game will take place in the player's imaginations (the so-called "theater of the mind"). However, the option to include visual/physical representations of any of the game's elements, be it characters or structures, is completely possible (if somewhat limited due to the fantastical nature of the adventures) and is, to some degree, implemented in **Fellowship of Heroes**:

- Players are able to control their characters and NPCs through interactions with 3D models.
- The monsters and enemies themselves are also represented as 3D models.
- The settlement's structures are represented visually through different sized tiles (see *Ruleset*), which are based on 3D models.
- The map for the base camp is a paper grid map.

The players will guide their characters in the world, controlling all the actions they take, whether those are combat related or merely interactions with the world, and relay their decisions to the *Dungeon Master (DM)* to deal with the consequences. The *DM* therefore plays an essential role in being the intermediary between the players and the fictional world itself.

## Section 7 - Fiction

**Fellowship of Heroes** relies heavily on its fiction to completely immerse players in a fantasy world which they can interact with in almost every way.

To ensure this fiction supports the party's experiences, the *Dungeon Master* is provided with a guiding document called *A Ride to Skalus*, which, along with its appendices, holds most fiction/lore about the campaign: objectives, NPCs, enemies and even events that might occur (this document is seen at the 6 seconds mark of the gameplay video). The current story, although limited, was written to showcase the features of the expansion.

Moreover, the **Character Sheets** give a special insight into the daring adventurers the players will portray - their attributes, skills, weapons and backstories are present in these documents (shown at the 50 seconds mark of the gameplay video), further fortifying the game's fiction.

### Fictional Setting

The fictional setting implemented was based on the universe of *Dungeon & Dragons*, which has a high-fantasy style with medieval and magical aspects. More specifically, the whole campaign occurs in the island of Skalus, which is described in *A Ride to Skalus* in the following manner:

*"Skalus is untamed tropical wilderness: dense jungles and snaky rivers ringed by mountains, volcanoes, and sheer escarpments."*

The residents of this island summon the heroes because...

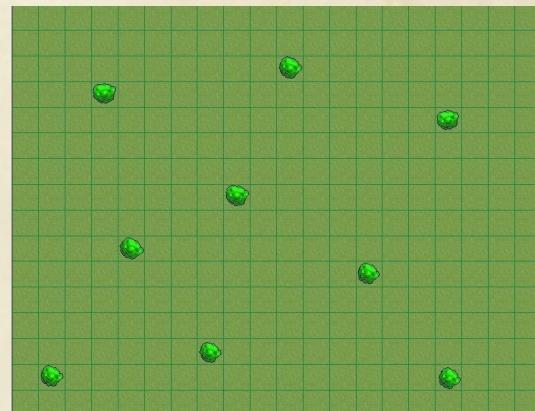
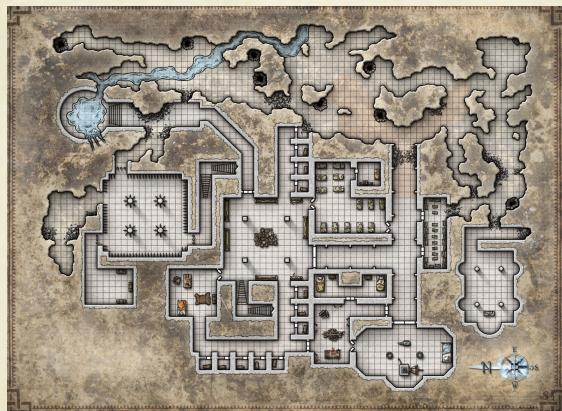
*"Something has been making the animals in the land of Skalus act out of the ordinary."*

And thus,

*"The party must travel through the island of Skalus and find the origin of this event."*

## Maps/Levels

The regular environment maps for **Fellowship of Heroes** (such as dungeons and other explorable locations) will be similar to the ones in *Dungeons & Dragons*, the only difference being the newly introduced **settlement map**. Similarly to regular maps, the latter has a grid system, which in this case is utilized to place down buildings, environmental tiles (such as the water tiles) and also to move the characters and monsters during battle scenarios.



*Regular environment map and the settlement map (Fellowship of Heroes)*

The main difference between these two types of maps is that the settlement map can evolve over time in terms of structures, whereas the regular maps only allow the placement of entities (enemies, NPCs and player characters). In fact, the settlement map is in constant mutation due to the construction of buildings by the party. Below is an example of the settlement map later in the campaign.



*Example of settlement map with tier 1 and tier 2 buildings*

## Art Direction

Similarly to what happens with the maps and fiction, the art direction aims to be **greatly based on *Dungeons & Dragons***, taking, for example, the **high-fantasy style** setting as inspiration for the design of the buildings.

Currently, the icons of the structures are mere abstract representations/prototypes of what the final product could be. Although they are images of actual, real-world models, the final product would have cleaner and purposely designed icons or even miniatures themselves.

Finally, as mentioned in **Section 6 - Player Interaction**, though most of the game will take place in the players' imaginations, there is an effort to reinforce the fictional setting through the artwork utilized in the supporting documents themselves. As an example we might consider the NPCs who might help players fend off invasions (see **Appendix B: Player Handouts** of the story guide, *A Ride to Skalus*):

