

# Skulldug!



## EXPLORER'S HANDBOOK

### OVERVIEW

*"Wherever there's treasure, you'll find me."*

In *Skulldug!*, you play as explorers racing to plunder an ancient cave of its treasures. Players take turns spending Action Points (AP) to explore new passages, fight monsters, use equipment, and drop traps for their opponents. Once you have collected enough treasure, you'll still have to make your way back out of the cave to safety, and since every treasure comes with its own deadly curse, getting out may prove even more dangerous than getting in. Adventuring can be great way to make your fortune, but only if you live to tell the tale...

### THE GOAL

*"I did it all for the glory. And the money. Mostly the money."*

The first player to end their turn in the Cave Entrance with 3 treasure cards in their hand wins.

### BOX CONTENTS

- 1 six-sided die
- 47 blue Fortune cards
- 31 red Hazard cards
- 50 Passage cards
- 5 Turn Action cards
- 5 Explorer tokens
- 25 Health gems
- 5 Dazed cards



### CREDITS

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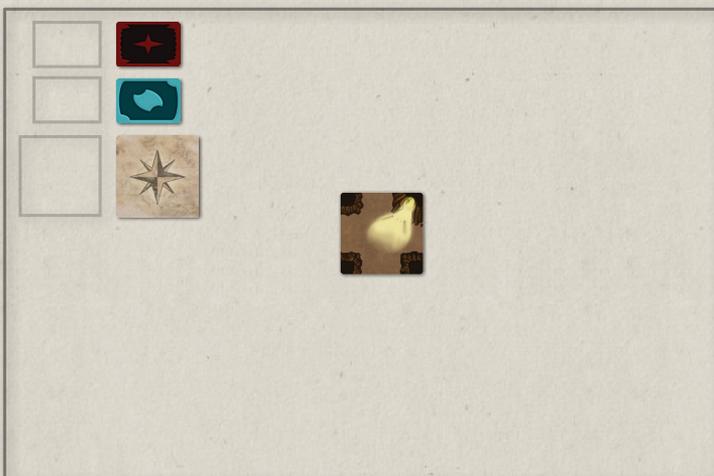
Cover art by Alix Branwyn



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## SETTING UP

*“Alright, folks. Let’s get down to business.”*

### **How much space do I need?**

This game is better with more space to build the cave into. For the best experience, use a large square play surface.

### **What if there are only 2 players?**

Please refer to the 2-player variant rules on page 10 before playing.

### **Can I shuffle the Fortunes normally?**

Of course! Since this randomizes how often treasures are drawn, you should be prepared for some oddly paced games if you do so.

1. Place the Cave Entrance card face-up in the middle of your play surface. The Cave Entrance is one of many *passages*, cards that comprise the layout of the cave.
2. Have each player roll the die to see who goes first. Play continues clockwise around the table from the winner.
3. Have each player select an explorer token and place it in the Cave Entrance.
4. Have each player pick their starting items (see Gear Up, page 5).
5. Give each player 5 Health gems.
6. Shuffle the Passage deck and place it to the side of your play surface, leaving room for a discard pile.
7. Shuffle the Fortune and Hazard decks and place them next to the Passages, leaving space for discard piles for each. In order to properly pace the game, we recommend that you shuffle the Fortune deck as follows:
  - a. Separate the purple treasure cards from the rest of the Fortune deck and shuffle both sets of cards individually.
  - b. Lay out each of the treasure cards face-down, then deal out the other cards on top of them to form new piles. Shuffle each pile of cards.
  - c. Stack the piles back on top of each other to reform the deck, placing any larger piles on top of the smaller ones.
8. Place the Dazed cards by the other decks.





## THE ADVENTURERS

The Adventurers are always spoiling for an expedition somewhere dangerous. Most of them are bankrolled by museums and universities, and they claim that all the treasure they find belongs back at those fine institutions for ‘research’ and ‘posterity’. Sure, some loot may find its way back into those fancy glass cases eventually, but more of it ends up as trophies on their personal mantles. You can get away with just about anything once you’ve got tenure...

**Starting items:** *Trusty Whip (Equipment), Questionable Rations (Consumable)*

## THE ROGUES

The Rogues are interested in one thing and one thing only: money. They’ve got this nasty habit of turning up where they’re not wanted, sneaking into the most secure locations in the world and making off with the valuables before anyone knows they were there. They’ll steal the buttons off of your coat and sell them back to you given a chance. Don’t bother trying to shoot after them, either – Rogues are even harder to kill than they are to catch.

**Starting items:** *Delicate Toolkit (Equipment), Rabbit’s Foot (Consumable)*



## THE HENCHMEN

These knuckleheads know how to throw a punch and little else, but that doesn’t mean they’re not a threat. They work for this whackjob called the Baron, breaking legs and scooping up cursed treasure wherever he sends them. There are rumors that he’s putting all those artifacts together into some kind of super-weapon, so whatever happens, it’s probably best if his Henchmen don’t get their hands on too many more toys for him.

**Starting items:** *Brass Knuckles (Equipment), Flak Jacket (Consumable)*

## THE SUITS

Government men all the way through, the Suits think that efficiency, precision, and an unsettling devotion to paperwork is more important than a personality any day of the week. They bring that zest for bureaucracy with them to the field, and fighting them can feel like running an impossible maze – sometimes literally. While you’re stranded and confused, they’ll ‘requisition’ that ‘classified material’ you were going to sell and lock it up in some undisclosed warehouse. Waste of good treasure, if you ask me.

**Starting items:** *Sturdy Shovel (Equipment), Convincing Sign (Trap)*



## THE CULTISTS

These guys give me the heebie-jeebies something fierce, no lie. They don’t talk much, but if you hear strange chanting down in the cave, you can bet a Cultist is somewhere close. No one knows exactly what they want or who they serve, but they’re vicious fighters, and they seem a little too into human sacrifice to be healthy...

**Starting items:** *Rusty Sword (Consumable), Soothing Pipe (Consumable), Bear Trap (Trap)*

**What if I enter an undiscovered passage on another player's turn?**

Discover a new passage and encounter any Hazards within it immediately. Once you have resolved this discovery, the other player resumes their turn where they left off.

**What if we run out of cards?**

If the Fortune or Hazard decks are empty, ignore any further calls to draw from them.

If the Passage deck is empty, take the passage discard pile, shuffle it, and make it the new Passage deck. If there are no cards in the passage discard pile, treat all corridors into undiscovered passages as solid walls until a passage is discarded.

**What if we hit the edge of the table?**

Treat the edges of the playspace as solid walls. You can't discover into the air!

Passages define the layout of the cave. You can move between *connected passages* (adjacent passages that have connecting corridors). You can also move through a corridor into a space that has not had a passage card placed into it yet. This kind of space is called an *undiscovered passage*.

If your explorer is ever placed into an undiscovered passage, you must immediately discover that passage.



**DISCOVERING PASSAGES**

Draw the top card from the Passage deck and place it into the undiscovered passage. You may choose the card's orientation, so long as you follow these rules:

- One of the new passage's corridors must connect to the passage you last occupied if at all possible.
- The other corridors must connect to as many discovered passages as possible.

*For example, let's say you're currently in the straight passage and move downwards, triggering Discovery. You draw a T-shaped passage and place it on the board:*



*The first placement violates the first rule by not connecting to the passage you came from. The second placement violates the second rule because there is one more possible connection that could be made. The last two placements follow both rules and are valid.*

Once you've decided on a valid placement, draw the number of Hazard and Fortune cards indicated by the icons on the new passage and put them into the passage as its contents. If you drew a trap or monster, you must immediately encounter it as described on page 9.



## HEALTH

Your Health is tracked by the number of Health gems you have at any time. You have a maximum of 5 Health. If you lose all of your Health, your explorer dies, and you must wait for backup to arrive before you can act again. Drop your entire hand (including all traps, treasures, and equipment) into your passage, remove your explorer from the board, and end your turn (if it's your turn).



## BACKUP

At the start of your first turn after you've died, reset your Health to 5, remove Dazed and any other status effects, and put your explorer in the Cave Entrance.

Draw the top card from the Fortune deck. If you wish, you may pick up this card immediately for 0 AP (see page 5 for more on the pick up action). If you don't want the Fortune, put it face-up in the Cave Entrance instead.

## DAZED

If you become Dazed, take a Dazed card and put it near your Health. Dazed cards are not items and don't count toward your hand limit (see page 5 for details).



While Dazed, you are unable to Dash, and you must subtract 1 from the value of every roll you make. You can spend 2 AP on your turn to cure Dazed.

## GEAR UP

*“First rule of adventure: never forget your good boots.”*

Before you begin playing, each player must select their starting items. If this is your first time playing, we recommend just taking the items suggested for your team on page 3. Otherwise, you can draft your own starting items with the following rules:

1. Search through the Fortune and Hazard decks and pull out every card with the Gear symbol shown here:



3. Each player may select either 1 card from the top row or 2 cards from the bottom row and place them in their hand. Start with the player you picked to go first and proceed around the table until everyone has had a chance to take their first items.
4. Now go around the table once more in reverse order, starting with the player who picked last. This time, you may pick 1 card from any of the remaining cards and add it to your hand.
5. Once every player has selected a card in the second round, take the remaining cards and shuffle them back into their respective decks.

Each turn you have 3 *Action Points* (AP) to spend performing actions and using equipment. You do not have to use all of your available AP each turn, but unused AP will not roll over to the next turn.

You can use any action as long as you have the AP it requires and are not currently engaged in an encounter (see page 12 for details on encounters). If you don’t have enough AP to perform an action, you’ll have to wait until your next turn to take that action.

Your turn ends when you declare it to be over or lose all of your Health, at which point the player to your left begins their turn.

## 1 AP - MOVE

“Tread carefully. Watch the shadows.”

Place your explorer into a passage connected to your own passage. You can move into undiscovered passages, which triggers Discovery.



## 1 AP - DASH

Move into a discovered passage, then move into another discovered passage. You cannot dash through encounters (see page 9) or into undiscovered passages. You cannot take another action in the middle of a dash.

“Run for your life!”

## 1 AP - PICK UP

“I’ll have that.”

Place an item card from your passage into your hand. Item cards are distinguished by the hand symbol shown to the right.

*Items* are cards that can be picked up and held in your hand.

You are affected by all rules on an item while holding it.

You must keep your hand face-up at all times. Read more

about the different types of items on page 11.



### How many items can I carry at once?

You can pick up as many items as you want. However, if you end your turn with more than 5 items in your hand, you must immediately drop cards until you are holding no more than 5 cards.

## 0 AP - DROP

“Oh, you like this? Go get it.”

Place an item from your hand into any passage within your line of sight.

*Line of sight* is the unbroken line that can be drawn from a passage in a single direction. Walls and undiscovered passages end line of sight. Your own passage is always in your line of sight.



## 1 AP - SHOVE (ONCE PER TURN)

Move another explorer from your passage into a connected passage. They must immediately resolve any encounters in the passage (see page 9). If you shoved them into an undiscovered passage, they must immediately Discover a new passage. You can only shove once per turn.

## 1 AP - THROW

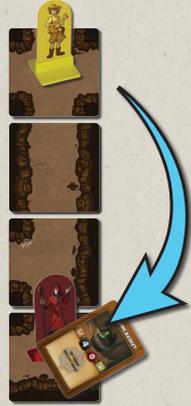
*"Heads-up, greaseball!"*

Hit an opponent with your unwanted items to make them drop their own hand! Declare your intent to throw and proceed:

### What counts as combat?

Combat refers to throwing items, defending from throws, and encountering monsters. Any card that affects combat applies to all of these. Monster encounters are described in detail on page 9.

- 1. Drop an item:** Drop an item from your hand into the passage of an enemy explorer within your line of sight to mark them as your target.
- 2. Roll for defense:** Have the targeted player roll the die to establish the difficulty of their defense.
- 3. Spend AP to Focus:** Declare how many AP you are spending to focus, if any. (See definition below.)
- 4. Roll for offense:** Roll the die and compare it to the difficulty of the defense. If you rolled less than the defense, your throw misses and the defender takes no Injury.
- 5. Deal the defender an Injury:** If you rolled equal to or higher than the difficulty value, the targeted player drops a random card from their hand into their passage and takes an Injury for 1 Health. For more on Injuries, see page 9.



## 1 AP - FOCUS

*"Close your eyes, breathe deep, and strike true."*

Before you roll against a difficulty value — either in an encounter (see page 9) or when throwing an item at another player — you may spend AP to modify the value of your roll. For each AP you spend focusing, you may add 1 to the resulting roll.

## 1 AP - DESTROY (ONCE PER TURN)

*"Priceless masonry, meet penny dynamite."*



Select an unoccupied passage (one that does not contain any explorers) that your passage faces and discard it. Your passage is facing all adjacent passages that its corridors point towards, even if the passages do not connect directly. Take any cards that were in that passage and split them into separate piles of Fortunes and Hazards. Shuffle

each pile and return it to the top of its respective deck. You can only destroy one passage per turn.

## OTHER ACTIONS

*"Check out what I can do with this!"*

Many cards will give you additional actions you can take on your turn. In general, these cards will either list the AP cost of using their ability or will tell you to discard them upon use. Discarding cards to use them does not cost AP and can be performed even when you have 0 AP remaining.

### Can I destroy the Cave Entrance?

No.

### Why destroy a passage?

Try using destroy to open a path for yourself or to remove an opponent's escape route. You can even destroy a dangerous passage to return its contents back into the deck for your opponents to discover!

## FORTUNE CARDS

"They're all so shiny..."

### When can I use consumables?

Consumables that simply say 'Discard' can only be played when you could take an action on your turn (i.e. when you are not resolving an encounter). Consumables with a specific condition can be played whenever that condition is satisfied. You are never required to use a consumable.

### Should I pick up this treasure?

Not every treasure is worth picking up immediately. If a treasure's curse is too dangerous to take on at the moment, try stashing the treasure somewhere safe and come back for it later.

### Can I drop a trap in the Cave Entrance?

Yes, but it won't be there long. At the end of each turn, discard any Hazards in the Cave Entrance.

## EQUIPMENT



Equipment cards are items that give you bonuses while held in your hand. They are not discarded when used, and they often let you spend AP to perform new actions.



## CONSUMABLES



Consumable cards are items that you can discard to gain a one-time bonus. Each consumable will tell you how and when you can use it. Using a consumable does not cost AP.



## TREASURE



These items are your ultimate goal – you must end your turn in the Cave Entrance while holding 3 treasures to win the game. Every treasure comes with a curse that affects you while it is in your hand.



## HAZARD CARDS

"Well, it's not like you need two arms."



## MONSTERS



Monsters are an ongoing danger that live in the cave, attacking explorers in their passage until they are slain in combat. Monsters are not items and cannot be picked up and put in your hand.

## TRAPS



Traps are a persistent danger triggered when explorers enter their passages. Traps are items, so you can pick one up whenever you are in the same passage as it, whether you have defeated the trap or not. Dropping traps from your hand into key positions can be a great way to disrupt your opponents!



No matter how careful of an explorer you are, eventually you will have to defend yourself from the dangers that lurk in the cave. Whenever you enter a passage containing a Hazard card, you trigger an *encounter*. Resolve encounters as follows:



1. **Spend AP to focus:** Declare how many AP you are spending to focus, if any. Each AP you spend adds 1 to your attack roll.
2. **Roll the die:** If you rolled equal to or higher than the difficulty value on the card you are encountering, you are victorious.

### **RESOLVING VICTORY**

If you defeated a monster, discard it. If you were encountering a trap, add it directly to your hand — you’ve bested the trap, and it is now yours to drop wherever you think it will do the most damage!

### **RESOLVING DEFEAT**

Take the Injury for the card you lost against: lose any Health specified by its damage value and suffer any On Injury effects written on the card. If you lost against a monster, you must then flee the passage.

### **FLEEING**

When you flee, move your explorer back into the last passage you occupied this turn. If you have not moved this turn or are unable to move into your last passage, you do not flee. Fleeing does not cost any AP.

### **INJURIES**

You take an Injury whenever your explorer is hurt in the cave. Usually this means losing the amount of Health specified by the damage value on the card injuring you. Watch out — many cards will also impart an additional effect when you are injured!

#### **What counts as combat?**

Encountering monsters, throwing items at explorers, and defending against throws are all combat. Any card that affects combat applies to all of these.

#### **What if I start my turn in a passage with a Hazard?**

You only encounter traps when you enter their passage. If there is a monster in your passage at the start of your turn, you must immediately encounter that monster.

#### **Are traps always armed?**

A trap in a passage is always dangerous, regardless who put it there!

#### **What if I encounter multiple Hazards at once?**

Face each encounter in turn. You must resolve any trap encounters before you encounter any monsters, but otherwise you may choose the order you face each encounter. You must face every encounter in your passage unless you flee, die, or are otherwise removed from the passage.

## 2-PLAYER VARIANT

*"It's just you and me, Baron. Let's dance."*

*Skulldug!* plays almost the same with two players as the regular game. However, when setting up, flip the Cave Entrance tile over to the L-shaped 2-player side. Instead of placing the Cave Entrance in the center of the playspace, place it in the corner with its corridors pointing inwards, like so:



Since the Entrance is in the corner of the playscape, its walls denote the boundaries of the cave. You cannot explore beyond its edges, and any corridors leading there should be treated as solid walls.

## TEAM VARIANT

*"Treat your friends right. They might just take a bullet for you."*

Stretch goal coming soon!

## CARD FAQs

“So that’s what that button does.”

- **Bloodstone Amulet / Running Shoes:** You can use your extra AP on the same turn that you pick these up.
- **Bucket of Grease / Putrid Horror:** Entering an undiscovered passage does not stop your movement. Discover the passage as usual, then keep moving until you hit an encounter or wall.
- **Ceremonial Armor:** Combat rolls include monster encounters, throwing cards at other explorers, and defending against an opponent’s throw.
- **Colossal Pit:** You must encounter Colossal Pit immediately upon entering its passage. You cannot choose to encounter another card in the passage before Colossal Pit.
- **Flare Gun:** Each successive passage you discover must be oriented to connect to the previous passage you discovered with Flare Gun.
- **Gorgeous Adonis:** Failing in combat against the Adonis does not cause you to flee. If you then fail in combat against another monster in the same passage, you must flee as normal.

## GLOSSARY OF ARCANA

“How do you say ‘don’t shoot’ in Mesopotamian?”

- **Adjacent:** Passages are adjacent if they are next to each other on the play surface. Diagonal passages are not adjacent. Passages do not have to be discovered to be adjacent.
- **Combat:** When you roll the die to attack or defend yourself from another explorer or an encounter with a monster.
- **Connected:** Connected passages are adjacent to each other and have corridors that meet. Discovered passages are connected to all undiscovered adjacent passages that they face.
- **Empty:** A passage is empty if it does not contain an explorer, item, or monster.
- **Facing:** A passage is facing all adjacent passages that it has a corridor pointing towards, even if the passages do not connect directly.
- **Item:** Any card that can be picked up and held in your hand. Items are distinguished by the hand symbol under their art.
- **Line of Sight:** The unbroken line that can be drawn from a passage in a single direction. Walls and undiscovered passages end line of sight.
- **Undiscovered:** A passage is undiscovered if it has not yet had a passage card placed into its space on the play surface.
- **Unoccupied:** A passage is unoccupied if it does not contain an explorer.
- **Your Passage:** The passage that currently contains your explorer.

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