

# SKULLDUG!

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**RULES AND INSTRUCTIONS**

# SKULLDUG!

www.skulldug.com

A game by Jon Gill and Brian Kopleck

*“Would I be the first to collect the treasure and escape to glory, or would my rivals bury me with all the brash adventurers who came before us?”*

*Collected Journals of Molly ‘Montana’ Jackson, vol iii 1943-1952*

## Background & Overview

For an adventurer, each day brings the same routine: grab your favorite boots, hop onto a plane to somewhere exotic, and dive right into another forgotten ruin to hunt for untold wealth. Maybe steal some other explorer’s spoils if you feel like spicing things up. At gunpoint, naturally.

Race to discover the secrets of a perilous ancient cave. If you can overcome traps, monsters, rivals and a pack full of cursed treasures, you just might make your fortune...

## The Goal

*“I did it all for the glory. And fame. And the money, that’s nice too.”*

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 Fortune cards



31 Hazard cards



50 Passage cards



5 Action cards



5 Health cards



5 Health markers



5 Drugged cards



5 Explorer tokens





fig. i: Playspace layout with space for discard piles

## Setting Up

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

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.



Have each player select an explorer token and place it in the Cave Entrance.

### Explorer Tokens

Your *explorer* represents your current position in the cave.

Place the Fortune and Hazard to the side of your play surface, leaving space for discard piles for each. Do *not* shuffle these decks until after you Gear Up (see page 6). These decks represent the items and monsters that you can find in the cave. Fortunes are good, while Hazards are almost always dangerous.



*Note that many cards perform effects that alter and even break the rules in this book — no matter what it says, the card always trumps the rules!*

## Setting Up (cont.)

Shuffle the Passage deck and place it by the other decks. Leave room for discarded passages as well.



### Passages

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

*“That room could have held anything. Gold, diamonds, spinning death blades... We sent the sherpa in first.”*

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.*

## Discovering Passages (cont.)

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 encounter it immediately as described on page 12. Otherwise, continue your turn as normal. If you run out of cards in the Hazard or Fortune decks, ignore any further calls to draw from the empty deck.

### *How did I get here?*

You may find yourself forced into an undiscovered passage against your will. You should Discover the passage immediately as normal, even if it's not your turn!

### *Recycling passages*

If you run out of cards in the passage deck, 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.

### *End of the line*

If you're playing on a table or other limited area, treat the edges of the playspace as solid walls. You can't Discover into thin air!

## Health and Death

Hand out a Health card to each player, and place a Health marker on the 5 spot of each card.

### Health

Your Health is tracked by the marker on your Health card. You have a maximum of 5 Health. If you lose all of your Health, your explorer dies, and you must wait for reinforcements to arrive before you can act again. Drop your entire hand into your passage, remove your explorer token from the board, and end your turn (if it's your turn).



### Reinforcements

*"I didn't tarry by the corpse for long. If one of the Baron's goons was here, another was sure to follow."*

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

Draw the top card from the Fortune deck and look at it. If you wish, you may pick up this card immediately for free (for more on the pick up action, turn to page 8). If you don't want the Fortune, put it face-up in the Cave Entrance instead.

### Drugged

If you become Drugged, take a Drugged card and place it near your Health. Drugged cards are not items and do not count toward your hand limit (for more on your hand limit, see page 7).



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

## Beginning the Game

*"He was so proud to be the first one to enter the dig site. Shame he never made it back out."*

The most adventurous player among you goes first. (Or you can just roll for it). Play always proceeds clockwise around the table.

## Gear Up

*“The first and most important rule of adventuring: never leave home without a good pair of boots.”*

Search through the Fortune and Hazard decks and pull out every card with the Gear symbol to the right. Lay them out in two rows, with the green equipment cards in the top row and the rest in the bottom row as illustrated below (for more on the various card types, turn to page 11).



fig. ii: Gear arranged for the choosing

Each player may select one card from the top row or two cards from the second row and place them in her hand. Start with the player you picked to go first and proceed around the table until everyone has had a chance to pick.

Now go around the table once more, starting with the player who picked last in the first round and proceeding counter-clockwise around the table. This time, you may pick one card from any of the remaining cards and add it to your hand.

Once every player has selected a card in the second round, take the remaining Gear cards and shuffle them back into their corresponding decks. The player who began the first round then takes their turn.

### **In a hurry?**

If you don't have the time for a full Gear Up, you can hand out the following pre-made gear sets to each player:

**Yellow:** *Trusty Whip, Questionable Rations*

**Blue:** *Brass Knuckles, Flak Jacket*

**Green:** *Delicate Toolkit, Rabbit's Foot*

**Red:** *Opium Pouch, Rusty Sword, Bear Trap*

**Black:** *Sturdy Shovel, Convincing Sign*

## Taking Turns

Each turn you can use your Action Points and the cards in your hand to perform various actions.

### Action Points

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.

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.

#### It's heavier than it looks

If you end your turn with more than 5 cards in your hand, you must immediately drop cards until you are holding no more than 5 cards (read about the drop action on page 8).

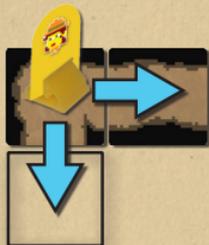
#### Up, out, and away

At the end of each turn, discard any traps and monsters that are in the Cave Entrance.

## Turn Actions

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.

### 1 AP - Move



*"Tread carefully. Stick to the light."*

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

### 1 AP - Dash

*"Don't breathe, don't blink, and don't stop."*

Move into a discovered passage, then move into another discovered passage. Triggering an encounter ends your dash immediately. You cannot take another action in the middle of a dash.



## Turn Actions (cont.)

### 1 AP - Pick Up

*“I’ll have that.”*

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



### Items

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. Keep your hand face-up at all times. Read more about the different types of items on page 11.

### 0 AP - Drop

*“Oh, you like this? Go get it.”*

Put an item from your hand into any passage within your *line of sight*. Try dropping traps in places where your opponents will have to move into them!



### 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 - Focus

*“Close your eyes, breathe deep, and strike true.”*

Before you roll against a Difficulty value — either in an encounter (see page 12) 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.

#### A note on dice

Many cards and effects will modify the value of your dice rolls. If your modified die roll is ever less than 0, treat it as 0. Likewise, if your modified roll is ever greater than 6, treat it as 6.

### 1 AP - Shove (once per turn)

*“This won’t hurt. Probably.”*

Move another explorer in your passage into a connected passage. They must encounter anything in the new passage as if they had moved into it on their own. If they move into an undiscovered passage, they Discover the new passage, not you. You can only shove once per turn.

## Turn Actions (cont.)

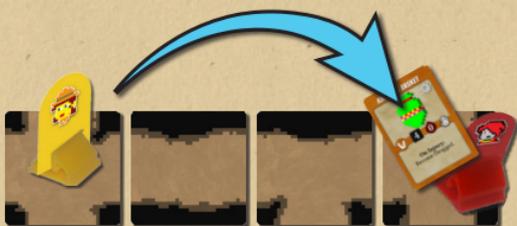


fig. iii: Montana takes aim at a rival explore

### 1 AP - Throw

*“Heads-up, greaseball!”*

Use your unwanted items to wound your opponents and make them drop their hard-earned loot! Declare your intent to throw and proceed as follows:

- **Drop an item:** Drop an item from your hand into the passage of another explorer within your line of sight to mark them as your target.
- **Roll for defense:** Have the targeted player roll the die to establish the Difficulty of their defense.
- **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.
- **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.
- **Deal the defender an Injury:** If you rolled equal to or higher than the Difficulty value, the targeted player loses 1 Health and drops a random card from their hand into their passage. This counts as an *Injury*.

### Injuries

You take an Injury whenever your explorer is hurt in the cave. Injuries come in all shapes and sizes. Usually this means losing the amount of Health specified by the Damage value on the card injuring you. Many cards will also impart an additional effect when you are injured, so watch out!

### A fight by any other name

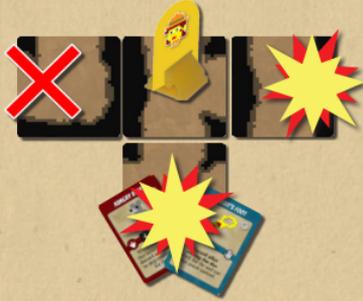
The term ‘combat’ applies to throwing items, defending from throws, and encountering monsters — any card that affects combat applies to all of these. Monster encounters are described in detail on page 12.

## Turn Actions (cont.)

### 1 AP - Destroy (once per turn)

*"Priceless masonry, meet penny dynamite."*

Collapse an old passage to make way for a new one! Select an unoccupied passage (one that does not contain any explorer tokens) that your passage faces and discard it. Your passage is facing all adjacent passages that it has a corridor pointing towards, even if the passages do not connect directly.



*fig. iv: You can destroy any unoccupied passage that your passage is facing*

Take any cards that were in that passage and split them into two piles of Fortunes and Hazards. Shuffle each pile and return it to the top of its respective deck.

Destroying passages is hard work, so you can only use the destroy action once per turn!

### **You'll kill us all!**

You may not destroy the Cave Entrance.

### **Destruction with the best of 'em**

Destroy is one of the most versatile actions in the game. Try using it to open a path for yourself or to destroy an opponent's escape route. And if a passage looks too dangerous or contested to move into, you can destroy it and return all of its contents to the top of the decks to be spread out into the next few Discovered passages.

### **Additional actions**

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.

## Card Types

### Fortune Deck

#### Equipment



Equipment cards are items that give you bonuses while held in your hand. They are not discarded when used, and 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.



#### When to consume

Consumables that simply say 'Discard' can only be played on your turn, while consumables with a specific condition can be played whenever that condition is satisfied. You are never required to use a consumable.

#### 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.



#### Treasure Tips

Pay careful attention to each new treasure you come across. Some might not be worth picking up immediately, especially if you need all of your strength to continue exploring the cave. Don't take this too far though — each treasure you leave behind is fair game for your opponent's to snatch up instead!

## Card Types (cont.)

### Hazard Deck

#### 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 vtheir 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!



## Encounters

*"Fascists? Mummies? Fascist mummies? No problem."*

No matter how careful of an explorer you are, eventually you will have to defend yourself from the dangers that lurk in the cave.

Encounters are triggered whenever you enter a passage containing a Hazard card. Resolve encounters as follows:

- **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.
- **Roll the die:** If you rolled higher than the Difficulty value on the card you are encountering, you are victorious. Otherwise, you must take the Injury specified on the card.



## Encounters (cont.)

### 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

If you fail in combat against a monster, you must flee the passage. 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.

#### Combat

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

#### It's in the room with you!

If there is a monster in your passage at the start of your turn, you must immediately encounter that monster.

#### Take all comers

If you trigger multiple encounters at the same time, you must 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.

## Card FAQs

- 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.
- Ethereal Vial:** You can put your explorer into any adjacent passage, even unconnected and undiscovered passages. You can only place your explorer in an undiscovered passage if there are passage cards available to Discover with.
- 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

- 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 on one side. 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.
- 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 token.
- Your Passage:** The passage that currently contains your explorer token.



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