



SKULL WIZARDS

= Of the Chaos Caverns =

For 2+ players

To play this game you need a large number of d6s (six-sided dice, preferably two per player), pencils and paper. Choose a player to be the **SKULL LORD**, and the rest to be players. If you're not the SKULL LORD, stop reading here! The SKULL LORD will help run the game, describe the outcomes of player action, and arbitrate disputes. If you're the SKULL LORD, have people take out a sheet of paper. Don't tell them what the game is about, but tell them to number the sheet 1-13. They must write a word of the following type after each number (do together):

1. Noun
2. Roll a d6 and write the number down (1-6)
3. Animal, vegetable, or mineral
4. Noun
5. -ing verb (running, jumping, climbing, etc)
6. Personality trait or emotion
7. Job
8. -ing verb
9. -ing verb
10. -ing verb
11. Adjective
12. Monster
13. -ing verb or noun

Players must then fill out a **character sheet**, using the information they wrote for each number.

Players start at **level 1**.

Your **class** is a (Noun from #1) (number they rolled from #2)

For #2, 1 = FIGHTER, 2 = THIEF 3 = Wizard, 4 = Priest, 5 = Bard, 6 = Paladin

For example, a player that wrote 'cheese' for #1 and rolled a 3 for #2 would be a Cheese Wizard.

Your **race** is a (#3) man/woman/person. *For example: a dog man, a broccoli woman, or a granite person.*

Your **ancestral weapon** is a (#4) of (#5). *For example: a spoon of jumping.*

Your **background** is a (#6)(#7). *For example: an angry clerk.*

Your **skills** are (#8-10), **write +1 next to two and -1 next to one**. *For example: swimming, cooking, flexing.*

#11-13 will be used during play. You should now have a complete character!

During play, you will gain **EXP** and **SHINY GOLD COINS**. It might be useful to draw a box or space to track these. EXP is used to level up, and SHINY GOLD COINS are used to buy items. Read each other your beautiful character sheets. If players draw a picture, the SKULL LORD can give them 1 EXP. Then it is time for ADVENTURE!

— PLAYING THE GAME —

During the course of a game, players will explore a dungeon. On each floor, players will come up against **CHALLENGES**. To beat these challenges, players must roll 2d6. If they can explain to the SKULL LORD how their class, background, or weapon will help them and the game master agrees, they can roll 3d6 and pick the highest two results. If they have a relevant skill or weapon, they add or subtract the relevant number to the total, even if the skill or weapon gives a penalty.

The result of your roll will always be the following:

10+ is a total success, with no downsides

7-9 is a success, but something bad or humiliating also happens such as getting stabbed, dropping or breaking your weapon, stepping on another character's foot, falling down a crevasse, etc. This might involve **taking damage**.

2-6 is an unequivocal failure, and you will always **take damage** and get humiliated

You only have to roll for a challenge, or else something that the SKULL LORD deems sufficiently challenging. The details of the outcomes of these rolls depend on what sort of challenge you are facing, whether it be combat, opening a door, jumping across a chasm, or checking a chest for traps. If a character **takes damage**, they **cross out one of their skills**, and it can no longer be used. **Once they cross out all three skills, they are dead!**

A player gains 1 EXP when they defeat a challenge, but *only* the player that rolled. **All players gain 1 EXP if they survive the dungeon**. Finally, **a player gains 1 EXP each time they establish something for the GM** (giving the GM information or details, filling in the 'blanks' or picking words for the challenges and dungeon).

Once a player reaches 5 experience, they LEVEL UP! They can either regain a crossed out skill (heal), increase one of their skills by +1, to a maximum of +3, or erase a skill and gain an entirely new skill that the rest of the group chooses for them.

Players may also gain **SHINY GOLD COINS** in the dungeon or by defeating challenges. A SHINY GOLD COIN can be spent at the shopkeeper to purchase new items (the shopkeeper is a random encounter in the dungeon, and can always be found back in town). I like to use actual coins (please use pennies) to

represent these coins. When a SHINY GOLD COIN drops, the first player to either grab it (if you're using actual coins/pennies) or say the words 'I grab it' gets the loot. If this gets too violent, play rock-paper-scissors.

—THE DUNGEON—

The story always goes the following way: a **dirty peasant** comes to the players while they are at a tavern. He/she has lost their (ADJECTIVE) (NOUN) in the **DUNGEON!** For finding it for him/her, the peasant will award the heroes a SHINY GOLD COIN each.

Once players enter the dungeon, roll a single challenge for each floor they go down (starting with the first one), and at the end of the floor, players will fight a monster.

CHALLENGES (roll a d6)

The SKULL LORD must have players **establish the details about these challenges** to gain EXP. For example, what kind of door are the heroes up against? A spiked door, covered in flames? A door made entirely out of spiders? We need to find out.

1. A DOOR!
2. A HAZARD!
3. A DEADLY TRAP!
4. A FORK IN THE CORRIDOR! (Left/right, pick two nouns, each room beyond is associated with one)
5. TREASURE!
6. THE SHOPKEEP!

The SHOPKEEP is a mysterious being that is seemingly invulnerable and always has one weird quirk (players must establish) such as a smiling mask, a sing-song voice, etc. They have one or two magic items and will sell them for one, two, or three SHINY GOLD COINS. Items can be normal, +1, or +2 in power. You can use the following templates for items, either bought or found, or make your own:

NOUN of -ING

ADJECTIVE NOUN

NOUN NOUN

NOUN NOUN of ADVERB -ING

Items worth more SHINY GOLD COINS will have more nouns and adjectives. Players can only encounter the shopkeep once per dungeon but he/she can always be found in town.

After a CHALLENGE, to descend a level, players will always fight a **MONSTER**. Ask players for their #11-13. The monsters are always (#11)(#12) with the power of (#13). *For example: A friendly cockatrice with the power of coffee.*

Defeating a monster is the same as defeating a challenge, but requires a number of successful rolls equal the floor number (so floor 1=1, floor 7=7). The player who defeats a monster gets 1 EXP and a SHINY GOLD COIN or possibly a new magic item.

I think a dungeon with 3-4 monsters works best for short games, but you can go longer if the players are having a good time. The SKULL LORD can also ask for the group to add more monster powers if things are getting too easy. The final monster will be guarding the object of the player's search, which they must retrieve safely.

If players survive the dungeon, they gain 1 EXP and heal to full. A player that levels up to level 5 gains a special title, which you can establish with the group, such as MASTER GROGNARD, or DUNGEONEER, or SCREAM LORD, or something.

— **ADVANCED SKULL WIZARDS OF THE CHAOS CAVERNS** —

Serious players only.

If players have already played this game, then you can have them complete character creation as normal, but everyone passes their paper left at the same time after everyone finishes writing each word. The paper players end up with is the one that they play with.

IMPAIRED!

If players get messed up or do something really hard or fail a roll you can count them as impaired for their next 2-3 rolls (they roll 3d6 and pick the lowest). Impaired gets canceled out to a normal roll if you would roll 3d6 and pick highest and vice versa

SKULL WIZARDS!

If you want to add an extra challenge, you can instead make the final boss of a dungeon a legendary SKULL WIZARD. A SKULL WIZARD has no mercy! A skull wizard always requires a number of successes equal to the number of players at the table. In addition, *any roll* of less than a 10+ against a SKULL WIZARD is INSTANT DEATH!

To make a skull wizard, it's use the following template:

LEGENDARY (ADJECTIVE) SKULL WIZARD (NAME)! HE/SHE/THEY WIELD THE (ADJECTIVE) POWER OF (-ING VERB)!

CLASS POWERS!

If you want to really confuse people, each class gets a special power!

FIGHTER: Gain double EXP and an extra SHINY GOLD COIN if you personally defeat a challenge or monster.

THIEF: Steal 1 item from anything or anyone per dungeon. Nobody can stop you, and nobody can steal it back once stolen, not even the shopkeep or another thief!

WIZARD: You gain the terrifying power to TRANSFORM! When you use this power, you first choose what you want part of your body to transform into, then your group establishes what part of your body transforms.

PRIEST: You can PRAY TO GOD and turn any roll into a coin flip, treating a tails as a 2-6 and a heads as a 10+

BARD: Gain double EXP for establishing, but when you do, you have to describe it by singing, or in a sing-song voice

PALADIN: Once per dungeon you can REDEEM a dead character, bringing them back to life and restoring them to full health. However, they must erase all their former skills and gain 3 entirely new skills, which are established by the group.