

Pirates & Primates

a.k.a. "I Beat the Sword Master & All I Got Was This Lousy RPG"

The hilarious roleplaying game of slapstick pirate problem-solving that doesn't contain any Disney intellectual property (I swear, Mr. Mouse, don't hurt me).

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Pregen Pirates & Scenario Hook

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Pencil and paper

Regular polyhedral dice: d12, d8, d6, d4.

Make a pirate

A player character is a pirate and has 3 scores: **Insultin'**, **Thievery**, **Treasure Huntin'**. One is 8, one is 6 and one is 4. (scores must always be an even

number). Distribute them however you wish. A Check is a d12 roll-under-or-equals your score.

- **Insultin'** is anything related to fighting or talking with people.
- **Thievery** is anything related to subterfuge, tinkering, or stealing.
- **Treasure Huntin'** is anything related to exploring, traversing, or searching.

Each score has an associated **Score Die**, and an **Inverse Score Die**. The *Score Die* is a die of the same size as the score (e.g. 4→d4, 6→d6, 8→d8). The *Inverse Score Die* is a die of size equal to the amount necessary to get to 12 from the score (e.g. 4→d8, 6→d6, 8→d4)

There is no stat for violence, because you can't directly hurt people in this game: all attempts automatically fail hilariously (elaborate machinations to cause indirect harm not included). Equally, it's impossible for player characters to die.

Always remember: player characters are dorks, and no-one thinks much of them. Each of their successes is dumb luck o a result of their weird-ass ideas. Each of their failures should be described with the appropriate amount of slapstick. Player characters are only occasionally competent, although they should reliably manage to be useful.

One of the players is called the **ScummMaster**, who doesn't play a pirate and covers the traditional GM role. See more below on how they're supposed to participate.

How to Play

The game is organized in **Chapters**. Each chapter has an **Objective**. Each Objective has **Sub-Objectives** that need to be completed in parallel to be able to finish the main Objective. The ScummMaster prepares a scenario with some colourful characters, an Objective with Sub-Objectives that are not immediately easy to achieve, and a bunch of locations and where one could find useful items. The characters in the scenario should be linked to one another. The ScummMaster should **not** prepare detailed solutions for puzzles, as creative solutions by the players is the goal here. However, they should have a vague idea of how certain things could be achieved, in case they need to provide hints on failed rolls (see below), and generally not make anything useful in the scenario easily available.

The game always takes places in **Locations**. The locations are organized in **Islands**. The pirates start out on an Island with an Objective and a hint on how to achieve it. To move to another Island it is necessary to have a **Boat**. It is always possible to get a boat on an Island, but it might not be easy.

When the pirates enter a location, the **ScummMaster** describes it. They describe all that is obvious or interesting, plus any obvious paths leading to other locations. Pirates can always go into areas that were not prepared by the ScummMaster (in case that wasn't obvious).

Actions

The players can declare what their pirates want to do. **Action Declarations** are resolved in the order they are said, but the ScummMaster is free to curtail an overzealous player to let other players have a try at things.

Players can also ask any amount of questions to get a better picture of the location, but the ScummMaster should always answer only what is obvious. If what they're looking for could reasonably be there, but the ScummMaster doesn't know if and where it is, they can call for a Treasure Huntin' check. If successful, they should still put it somewhere difficult to reach or get.

To learn more than just what's obviously there, active examination through the **Examine** action is required.

Please note that characters **can't get hurt** in this game. Players are disallowed from making any declaration that would put their pirate's life or limb at risk. The ScummMaster has final say on whether that's the case. However, please note that cartoon logic and rule of funny apply, so many things that would be dangerous IRL are only comedy fuel in this game (e.g. shooting yourself out of a cannon).

Players are also **disallowed from wounding or killing non-player characters with weapons**, as that's not very funny. Threats by a player character will be derided by non-player characters, as they are obvious dorks and everyone will be able to call their bluff. However, indirect harm or deception to appear threatening is allowed.

Non-player characters cannot be hurt or killed **directly**, but can receive any form of cruel, unusual or degrading punishment. The funnier the better, and black humour is allowed. Why kill a sunbathing guy to get the map tattooed on his back when you can fry it off disguising olive oil as sunscreen?

Declarations should happen organically, but they generally fall into the following types. For each type, a description of what happens for a successful Action is given.

- **Move.** The player will declare where they want their pirate to move. *Success:* the pirate moves to the described place and the ScummMaster reveals any new information that they see.
- **Interact.** The player will declare what element of the environment their pirate wants to interact with, what they're trying to do and how. *Success:* the goal is, at least partially, achieved.
- **Examine.** The player will declare that their pirate examines an element of the environment more closely. *Success:* more information about the element is given.
- **Combine.** The player will indicate that they want to combine two Items in their inventory, and how so. *Success:* the Items are combined into a new Item.
- **Pick up.** The player will declare that their pirate picks up an element of the environment. *Success:* the element becomes an **Item** and enters the pirate's **Inventory** — there are no limits to the amount of items that can be stored, pirate pockets have infinite storage. Please enjoy describing your pirate magically shoving a cannonball in their pockets.
- **Talk.** The player will declare that their pirate talks to a non-player character. *Success:* **Dialogue** is initiated (see below on how dialogue works).
- **Give.** The player indicates that they want to give an item to a non-player character. *Success:* The character will accept the item, it will be removed from the player character's inventory, and this will trigger **Dialogue** with the non-player character (see below on giving items).

After the action is declared, the ScummMaster will **Adjudicate** what happens as a consequence (see below). Some actions just succeed, others are just impossible to do but will provide hints on how to do it, and others require Checks. See the Adjudication section for an explanation on when to use each.

A declaration might involve the use of an **Item** in the pirate's **Inventory**, in that case that should be taken into account by the ScummMaster when **Adjudicating** the action.

Once a declaration is made, it can't be taken back (unless it involves a **Check** or a **Reaction**, see below).

If a declaration involves multiple actions, resolve them in their logical order. After each resolution, the declared actions might not be possible; in that case they are invalidated. After each resolution, the player might want to take back their actions; they are allowed to do so.

Generally, once you get used to it, you can handle declarations more fluidly, do multiple at the same time, and not interrupt the flow of narration, but please note that the basic actions are still the ones described and that they should be resolved as described.

Adjudicating Actions

First rule of adjudicating: make it funny, make it weird. Everything in this game should go by the rules of cartoon logic and rule of funny — not rule of cool! These guys are dorks. Reward funny shit and funny (but sensible) combinations of items.

First of all, the action might trigger a **Reaction** from the environment or a non-player character. In such a case, say what happens (and declare a **Consequence** if needed) and, if it's still valid, ask the player if they want to revise their declaration.

The ScummMaster should first of all see if they think the action is normally doable by the pirate. If that's the case, the action just Succeeds and they say what happens as a result.

Checked Actions

If that's not the case, they can ask for a **Check**. In this case, the ScummMaster will declare which Check is necessary, and the player will have an opportunity to revise their Declaration. A check will determine the positive or negative result of the action, and also permanently determine if this is doable by this pirate, with the approach described. Further identical actions don't require a check, and will always succeed or fail according to the previous check.

If a player character attempts an action for which another player character has already made a Check with the same approach, and they have the same score, they will not reroll but reuse the other character's result.

If a player character B attempts an action for which another player character A has already made a Check with the same approach, and their scores are different:

- **A's Check failed and B's score is higher:** B can reroll for themselves, but A's failure makes it more difficult. Instead of a d12 they roll A's *Inverse Score Die* plus A's score.

A's score is 4 → roll d8+4

A's score is 6 → roll d6+6

A's score is 8 → roll d4+8

- **A's Check succeeded and B's score is lower:** B must reroll for themselves, but A's success makes it easier. Instead of a d12 they roll A's *Score Die*:

A's score is 4 → roll d4

A's score is 6 → roll d6

A's score is 8 → roll d8

- **Any other case:** no reroll, and the previous result is kept.

If multiple characters have previously done the roll, always compare to the one with the nearest score.

In case multiple player characters attempt the same Action with the same approach, the failing ones all get identical results, and the succeeding ones get identical results as well.

The reason for this rule is to encourage characters with lower scores to try Checks, as they don't hurt the chances of characters with higher scores.

Items

Involving an **Item** in the action changes the approach and should lead to a new Adjudication. On a success, the item may or may not be destroyed, according to which is funniest, but it is never destroyed on a failure — if this is unrealistic, just make it ridiculously so.

Consequences

A failed check will result into the action failing in a ridiculous or humiliating way, or some sort of ridiculous **Consequence** for the character. (Remember to often do this, as Consequences can be turned into tools by the players). The failure

should also indicate some sort of hint on how the action might be performed (e.g. not being tall enough, slipping on the floor, etc ...).

Similarly to **Items**, involving a **Consequence** in an approach changes the action and should lead to new Adjudication.

Impossible and Disallowed Actions

The ScummMaster can also declare an action to be just impossible with the current approach. They must provide a vague hint (keep it vague!) on what they think would allow the pirate to perform the action. They can do this diegetically by allowing the action to fail automatically and describing the hint as part of the failure.

Finally, the ScummMaster can declare an action to be disallowed. This is usually reserved for stuff that is too unbelievable or that would put the pirate's life or limb at risk, but please remember the **first rule of adjudicating**.

Adjudicating each Action type

- **Move**. Generally, just let them move wherever. If the move involves some sort of dangerous athletics or acrobatics, ask for a Treasure Huntin' Check. If the move involves subterfuge, distraction or sneaking, ask for a Thievery Check.
- **Interact**. This is very general, and you should use your best judgement according to the situation. Reward creative and funny uses of items. Checks might be required, use them if you're not sure.
- **Combine**. Reward funny ideas, but keep it sensible. Usually, no need for Checks here.
- **Examine**. Tell them what they see, and give a **Consequence** if it's warranted. Messing with the wrong stuff will cause trouble, and non-player characters will notice active searches. Sometimes, to examine something you will need to do something else, or evade a non-player character. Ask for a Check in that case.
- **Pick up**. Generally, act just like Examine. Non-player characters will not like it if you touch their stuff, and might ask for anything in return, but players should be able to pick up anything that's not nailed down otherwise.
Remember: even the most mundane object should be a challenge to get and should not be left laying around to be easily picked up. Especially

useful tools like a pair of scissors or a knife. And NPCs that have those tools don't want to lend it to some dorky pirate that just passed by.

- **Talk.** Generally, all non-player characters should be talkable to, but some might require some conditions to get access to them first, or to be able to get their attention.
- **Give.** Generally, non-player characters will turn down (and make fun of) things that they haven't asked for, or that they don't want. Players should try to figure out what a character wants before offering their items to them.

Consequences

Whenever the ScummMaster applies a consequence to a pirate, they describe something that affects them in a negative way because of the result of an Action (e.g. being tarred and feathered). Consequences are never permanent, and can be easily brushed off by the pirate by any reasonable attempt at doing so. However, if they stop a pirate from progressing in what they were trying to do, they should require a different approach to be able to be evaded.

Remember that once a Consequence was obtained as a result of an Action, that Consequence may be obtained again by performing the exact same Action. Players are encouraged to use Consequences generated by an Action creatively to perform other Actions.

Dialogue

Dialogue is like a miniature location, but just between the characters. It will be handled just by talking between players and ScummMaster. Dialogue can result in Consequences, information, and receiving Items from non-player characters. In general, the ScummMaster will just portray the character as earnestly as possible, according to his preparation.

NPCs usually have some weird quirk to them and have some sort of regular job mixed with being a pirate. It doesn't matter if it doesn't make sense, pirate librarian, pirate barber, pirate actor, pirate manager, pirate dry cleaner, pirate real estate salesman, pirate CEO, pirate politician. Some of them are even actual pirates!

Giving

When player characters want something significant out of a non-player character, they usually will have something that they want in return, although it could be vague. Players should be able to easily discover this by talking, and then either perform a relevant Action and Give them something relevant to get their reward.

Sometimes the reward is not explicitly given by the character, but Giving an Item or performing a

If you're not sure whether players can get something right away or need to do or give something, call for an **Insultin'** check.

Voodoo

The Caribbean is full of strange magic. Player characters are dorks, so they don't know how to use it. Any attempt at voodoo requires instructions from someone knowledgeable that must be followed for it to work. Ingredients may be replaced with something hilariously related, and results will be similarly hilariously unpredictable.

Witch doctors are present in many Islands and provide voodoo services to the local populace. They usually require some sort of payment or exchange. They usually speak in riddles and are really fucking annoying.

Living skeletons are pretty much everywhere if you're looking. Don't judge them because they don't have flesh! They mostly chill around just like normal people, just more sad. If a skeleton is an asshole or a psychopath, being a skeleton has nothing to do with it, they were probably like that as a human.

Skeletons can't die but they can be disassembled. The skeleton will not like this.

Turning a person into a skeleton is a hilarious alternative to death. Voodoo is required.

Guns

All guns are single-shot and can be used for mischievous non-violent purposes. Any attempt to fire a gun at a person will fortuitously and hilariously miss the target. Any successful attempt to fire a gun at an object held by a character will hit the object but miraculously leave the person unharmed. If you need to call a Check for using a gun, use **Insultin'**.

Swordfighting

There is no combat as such in this game — if you attempt it, everyone will make fun of you for *actually trying to swordfight*. Pirates can engage in **insult sword-fighting** if they have a sword. Skill with a sword is useless, only your tongue will bring you victory. It is possible to insult duel with an alternate implement, if agreed upon by both parties.

This is essentially just part of **Dialogue**. Pirates can only initiate insult sword-fighting with other sword-armed and sharp-tongued characters. An unarmed pirate will not insult swordfight.

No amount of disability will prevent an armed and willing pirate from insult swordfighting you. Even the dead (especially the dead) will insult swordfight you. Hatred finds a way.

A mute character will hold their sword with their teeth or with their toes or whatever and throw insults in pirate sign language; it is necessary to learn pirate sign language to insult swordfight them, otherwise, you lose by default by lack of comeback, and everyone present will make fun of you.

A deaf character who's not also mute will read insults from your lips. If you try to conceal them, you will lose by default and everyone will make fun of you.

A blind character will insult swordfight you, with hilarious and unexpected accuracy.

A character unable to walk will insult swordfight you from a wheelchair (it could or could not be made from the bones of his slain enemies).

Player characters are dorks, any attempt of them to insult swordfight each other will not engage insult swordfighting but only cause humiliating **Consequences** to both, including the derision of everyone around. Insult swordfighting is only between player characters and a non-player character.

Player characters are dorks, and thus unable to refuse an insult swordfight challenge if armed. They will lose by default if they try.

Insult swordfighting is won by the best of three **bouts**. The character who challenged starts with the initiative. The character with the initiative insults, the other spouts a comeback. If the comeback is successful, the reactive character wins the bout, otherwise, the one with the initiative does. The next bout proceeds with initiative to the winner.

The ScummMaster is required to **take notes** on all successful insults and comeback pairs and keep them hidden from players. Different Islands will have different sets of insults and the insults valid for one Island will not be valid for the other — any attempt to use them will fail automatically and cause derision.

If the NPC has the initiative, they will Insult, and the player must comeback. If this insult is already known, and the player remembers a previously successful comeback to that insult (they aren't allowed to take notes!), they can deliver it and win the bout automatically.

If not, they will improvise a comeback. The ScummMaster and the non-involved players and the ScummMaster will vote on whether the comeback was worthy (the ScummMaster breaks ties). If the comeback is unworthy, the player loses the bout. A worthy retort will trigger an **Insultin'** check, which will determine the outcome of the bout. If everyone unanimously agrees the retort was particularly witty, the comeback may automatically succeed.

If the player has the initiative, they will throw an insult. If it's an existing insult, just proceed. If it's a new insult, the non-involved players and the ScummMaster will vote on whether the Insult was worthy (the ScummMaster breaks ties). An unworthy insult will automatically lose the bout. A worthy (or pre-existing) insult will trigger an **Insultin'** check (with a +1 or -1 modifier for unskilled or skilled NPCs) to see if the NPC has a comeback to this insult or loses (the player does the check, so a successful check means the NPC loses). If an existing retort exists, they will use that, otherwise, the ScummMaster will make one up (make it witty!).

Insults and comebacks must be generic and not make fun of any specific characteristic of the target. However, the insult may imply some negative characteristic that may or may not be true (for example, smelly feet). Breaking this rule automatically makes the insult or comeback unworthy and everyone will make fun of you.

Strong NPCs

Strong or important NPCs will only accept to fight a pirate if they have some sort of notoriety to them, they will usually give a condition before they will accept a fight.

Duels with strong NPCS work differently: Strong NPCs always have the initiative, and the player must always comeback. The ScummMaster will then take his list of insults and comebacks, and write new insults that work with the

old comebacks (make it sensible, or funny, or both!). The player will have to guess what comeback goes with which insult.

Custom comebacks are allowed, but **only** if they are determined to be unanimously witty. Otherwise, no **Insultin'** check will be allowed and the comeback will automatically fail (with derision from the NPC).

Victory

Victory in insult swordfighting means that the winner gets to take something valuable from the loser. If the loser has nothing of value to give, then they will just have to admit that and be humiliated.