

Grave

The gates to the underworld hang open.

Hungry creatures wander a ruined land.

Demons hoard the treasure they value most—souls.

The heroes of old are all corrupted or dead.

But in this place, the dead do not occupy graves for long.

GRAVE (v0.8) is **toolkit for soulslike adventures** with old school rules, adapted by Jason Tocci from Ben Milton's KNAVE. Its features include:

Exploration begins right away. Every character is newly awakened from death, with no memories of themselves or the world. Games get started fast, with both random character generation rules and archetypical, pre-assigned options for stats and gear. No time needed to come up with personal histories; players and their characters learn about the world and themselves through play.

Complete rules, plus new options. Grave leverages Knave's streamlined rule set, featuring PCs defined by ability scores and equipment rather than classes, simple inventory management and item degradation, and the option to use player-facing rolls on both offense and defense (for those who want to roleplay their character's frantic, somersaulting dodge technique). It introduces new rules for death and resurrection, a "stamina" currency for spells and maneuvers, 50 magic items, and 60 level-less spells across 3 traditions, but it remains compatible with old school renaissance (OSR) adventures, bestiaries, and spell lists.

Designer commentary. Grave includes designer comments on how and why some rules are changed from Knave.

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Backgrounds

To create a player character (PC), you may choose one of the following backgrounds with pre-determined abilities and equipment, or you may create a vagabond with randomly rolled abilities and equipment.

Knight	+4 STR +1 INT	+1 DEX +1 WIS	+3 CON +2 CHA
Cross-hilt sword	d8 damage	2 slots	3 quality
Jousting shield	+1 ARMOR	1 slot	1 quality
Mail and surcoat	+4 ARMOR	3 slots	3 quality

Wizard	+1 STR +4 INT	+2 DEX +3 WIS	+1 CON +1 CHA
Academy robe	+1 ARMOR	1 slot	1 quality
Astral Arrow spell	Ranged attack; up to d6 damage/level		
Hedge Magic spell	Harmless, obvious parlor tricks		
Silver-pommel cane	d6 damage	1 slot	3 quality

Cleric	+2 STR +2 INT	+1 DEX +4 WIS	+1 CON +2 CHA
Horsehair robe	+1 ARMOR	1 slot	1 quality
Lay on Hands spell	Touch to heal up to d6 HP/level		
Quarterstaff	d8 damage	2 slot	3 quality

Witch	+1 STR +3 INT	+1 DEX +1 WIS	+2 CON +4 CHA
Tattered robe	+1 ARMOR	1 slots	1 quality
Witch Fire spell	hold or throw fire; d6 area damage		
Ritual knife	d6 damage	1 slot	3 quality
Spirit salt (3 uses)	heal d4 stamina	1 slot	—

Thief	+1 STR +1 INT	+4 DEX +3 WIS	+1 CON +2 CHA
Daggers	d6 damage	1 slot	3 quality
Grappling hook	+20ft rope	1 slot	—
Hooded leathers	+2 ARMOR	1 slots	3 quality
Locksmith tools	—	1 slot	—

Hunter	+2 STR +1 INT	+4 DEX +2 WIS	+2 CON +1 CHA
Hunting bow	d6 damage	2 slots	3 quality
Quiver (20 arrows)	—	1 slot	—
Leather armor	+2 ARMOR	1 slot	3 quality
Bear trap	d6 damage	1 slot	—

Marauder	+4 STR +1 INT	+3 DEX +1 WIS	+2 CON +1 CHA
Battle axe	d10 damage	3 slots	3 quality
Fur-trimmed hides	+2 ARMOR	2 slots	3 quality
Torches (5)	—	1 slot	—
Tinderbox	—	1 slot	—

Noble	+2 STR +2 INT	+2 DEX +2 WIS	+1 CON +3 CHA
Ornate rapier	d8 damage	1 slot	3 quality
Parrying dagger	d4 damage	1 slot	1 quality
Fine clothes	+1 ARMOR	1 slot	1 quality
Signet ring	worth 500+ souls to the right buyer		

Outcast	+2 STR +2 INT	+2 DEX +2 WIS	+2 CON +2 CHA
Makeshift club	d8 damage	2 slots	1 quality
Filthy rags	+0 ARMOR	1 slot	1 quality
Memento	A worthless (?) trinket		

Vagabond	? STR ? INT	? DEX ? WIS	? CON ? CHA
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Roll 3d6 in order for each of the six **abilities**, recording the lowest result for each. You may swap any two abilities. To determine starting equipment, consult the *Items* page, rolling d20 on **Weapons**, d20 on **Tools & Supplies**, a d8 on **Clothing & Armor**. Optionally, you may roll only a d4 on **Weapons** and/or on **Clothing & Armor** in order to roll on **Alchemy & Spellcasting** once for each. Finally, take either a shield, helmet, or an item required for something else you got (e.g., arrows for bow, oil for lantern).

Other Characteristics

The abilities and armor total listed above represent their **bonus**, added to your d20 rolls; add 10 to each to determine their **defense**, the target opponents roll over to act against you. **Hit points** (HP) start at their maximum, d6 (or 3) + CON bonus. **Item slots** equal your CON defense. **Stamina** equals your unused item slots. **Prepare spells** (if you have any) equal your INT bonus. **Level** and **deaths** begin at 1; **souls** begin at 0. Optionally, invent or roll for as many or as few **traits** as you like using the next page.

Designer's Note: I use d6s for HD, instead of Knave's d8s, for faster combat. I also offer the option of a flat 3 HP per level to mimic the predictable progression of soulslike games.

Traits

Physique

- | | | | |
|--------------|------------|---------------|--------------|
| 1. Athletic | 4. Gaunt | 7. Slender | 10. Stout |
| 2. Corpulent | 5. Hulking | 8. Flabby | 11. Towering |
| 3. Delicate | 6. Lanky | 9. Statuesque | 12. Wiry |

Face

- | | | | |
|-------------|--------------|-------------|-------------|
| 1. Angular | 6. Elongated | 11. Impish | 16. Sharp |
| 2. Blunt | 7. Patrician | 12. Narrow | 17. Soft |
| 3. Bony | 8. Pinched | 13. Ratlike | 18. Square |
| 4. Chiseled | 9. Hawkish | 14. Round | 19. Wide |
| 5. Delicate | 10. Broken | 15. Sunken | 20. Wolfish |

Eyes

- | | | | |
|---------------|--------------|-----------------|-------------|
| 1. Appraising | 6. Darting | 11. Kind | 16. Soft |
| 2. Bewitching | 7. Earnest | 12. Knowing | 17. Smiling |
| 3. Bright | 8. Fierce | 13. Narrow | 18. Vacant |
| 4. Brooding | 9. Hungry | 14. Piercing | 19. Wide |
| 5. Cold | 10. Innocent | 15. Questioning | 20. Weary |

Hair

- | | | | |
|------------|---------------|------------------|-------------|
| 1. Bald | 6. Curly | 11. Limp | 16. Spiky |
| 2. Braided | 7. Curtained | 12. Long | 17. Tonsure |
| 3. Bun | 8. Disheveled | 13. Sides shaved | 18. Topknot |
| 4. Coarse | 9. Dreadlocks | 14. Pageboy | 19. Wavy |
| 5. Cropped | 10. Frizzy | 15. Ponytail | 20. Wispy |

Complexion

- | | | | |
|----------|-----------|----------|------------|
| 1. Black | 4. Russet | 7. Fawn | 10. Pale |
| 2. Umber | 5. Gold | 8. Sandy | 11. Ashen |
| 3. Sepia | 6. Tawny | 9. Pink | 12. Bluish |

Marks

- | | | | |
|-----------------|-----------------|-------------------|------------------|
| 1. Eerily, none | 6. Curved spine | 11. Penance scar | 16. Lost teeth |
| 2. Leathery | 7. Bent nose | 12. Noose scar | 17. Lost fingers |
| 3. Craggy | 8. Limping | 13. Shackle scars | 18. Lost ear |
| 4. Pockmarks | 9. Milky eyes | 14. Whip scars | 19. Lost eye |
| 5. Firemark | 10. Nervous tic | 15. Surgery scar | 20. Branded |

Speech

- | | | | |
|---------------|------------|--------------|----------------|
| 1. Blunt | 6. Droning | 11. Gentle | 16. Slow |
| 2. Booming | 7. Dry | 12. Gravelly | 17. Squeaky |
| 3. Breathless | 8. Erudite | 13. Hurried | 18. Stuttering |
| 4. Dramatic | 9. Florid | 14. Mumbling | 19. Terse |
| 5. Drawling | 10. Formal | 15. Rambling | 20. Whispery |

Adornment

- | | |
|------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. None | 11. Geometric tattoo |
| 2. Earring(s) | 12. Botanical tattoo |
| 3. Face ring(s) | 13. Animal tattoo |
| 4. Several piercings, chain | 14. Dragon tattoo |
| 5. Ritual scarification | 15. Prison tattoo(s) |
| 6. Dark, sharp makeup | 16. Church symbol tattoo |
| 7. Colorful, striking makeup | 17. Hidden, heretical tattoo |
| 8. Soft, subtle makeup | 18. Extensive occult tattoos |
| 9. War paint | 19. Unfamiliar name tattoo |
| 10. Dyes in bold colors | 20. Cryptic tattooed message |

Memory

- | | |
|------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1. Nothing, not even a name | 11. A tale of the Rulers of Old |
| 2. Your enemy's name | 12. The treasure you sought |
| 3. The face of one you loved | 13. The king's resting place |
| 4. The tune of a lullaby | 14. A way into The Castle |
| 5. Where you called home | 15. The Prophecy of Hope |
| 6. How you died | 16. A secret order's passphrase |
| 7. The nature of your crimes | 17. A secret of the Church |
| 8. Your dying wish | 18. The Academy's location |
| 9. How you got your weapon | 19. A forbidden rite |
| 10. The oath you swore | 20. The ferryman's advice |

Decay

- | | |
|---------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1. Solid black eye(s) | 11. Flayed skin |
| 2. Rattling shiver | 12. Withering, papery skin |
| 3. Shedding gray dust | 13. Black, crisscrossing veins |
| 4. Translucent skin | 14. Reassembled unevenly |
| 5. Loudly snapping joints | 15. Huge, gaping wound |
| 6. Cadaverous, or bloated | 16. Shedding tears of blood |
| 7. Gangrenous flesh | 17. Riddled with maggots |
| 8. Putrid stench | 18. Rimed with hoarfrost |
| 9. Rigor mortis | 19. Beetles scuttling on skin |
| 10. Pulsating muscles | 20. Coughing grave dirt |

Name

- | | | | | |
|-------------|------------|----------------|-------------|------------|
| 1. Ainsley | 11. Grey | 21. Kiran | 31. Pickle | 41. Spider |
| 2. Ash | 12. Harper | 22. Lennox | 32. Quinn | 42. Storm |
| 3. Brogan | 13. Ikram | 23. Lindsey | 33. Reese | 43. Teagan |
| 4. Callan | 14. Iseul | 24. Lyons | 34. Robin | 44. Temple |
| 5. Charlie | 15. Ivory | 25. Mackenzie | 35. Rowan | 45. Urias |
| 6. Devlyn | 16. Joshi | 26. Maze | 36. Ryley | 46. Val |
| 7. Duck | 17. Joyce | 27. Morgan | 37. Scabs | 47. Vanja |
| 8. Ejiro | 18. Jin | 28. Nikora | 38. Shay | 48. Wallis |
| 9. Eventide | 19. Keever | 29. Parker | 39. Shahnaz | 49. Wynne |
| 10. Fox | 20. Kelsey | 30. Pigwhistle | 40. Slaine | 50. Zola |

Moniker

- | | |
|------------------------------|----------------------|
| 1. ... of the Floating Peak | 26. Lucky ... |
| 2. ... of the Great Manse | 27. Proud ... |
| 3. ... of the Porcelain City | 28. Peculiar ... |
| 4. ... of Titan's Back | 29. Penitent ... |
| 5. ... of Candlerock | 30. Baleful ... |
| 6. ... of Keldon | 31. Unflappable ... |
| 7. ... of Surasha | 32. Beautiful ... |
| 8. ... of Yurai | 33. Slippery ... |
| 9. ... of Riuvensieg | 34. Jovial ... |
| 10. ... of Arandel | 35. Credulous ... |
| 11. ... the Left Hand | 36. Cursed ... |
| 12. ... the Redeemed | 37. Magnanimous ... |
| 13. ... the Tainted | 38. Matchmaker ... |
| 14. ... the Faithful | 39. Confessor ... |
| 15. ... the Bold | 40. Sentinel ... |
| 16. ... the Empty-handed | 41. Inheritor ... |
| 17. ... the Gambler | 42. Mankiller ... |
| 18. ... the Prophesied | 43. Claviger ... |
| 19. ... the Unforgiven | 44. Royal Taster ... |
| 20. ... the Mercenary | 45. Inquisitor ... |
| 21. ... Twice-forgotten | 46. Kinslayer ... |
| 22. ... Dusk-clad | 47. Lightkeeper ... |
| 23. ... Tear-drinker | 48. Jester ... |
| 24. ... Cloud-watcher | 49. Graverobber ... |
| 25. ... Coal-walker | 50. Demongate ... |

Pronoun

- | | | |
|-------------|------------|---------------|
| 1. She, her | 2. He, him | 3. They, them |
|-------------|------------|---------------|

Items

The items on this page are common enough that merchants might have some in stock, with a **cost** in souls (s). Merchants tend to only have a limited selection of items—typically d4 categories, 2d4 items in a category.

PCs' carrying capacity is measured in **item slots**, and have as many item slots as their CON defense. Unless otherwise specified, items take up a *default 1 slot*; this includes most things too big to fit in your mouth, but small enough to hold in one hand, including spell texts, clothing, light weapons, tools, and so on. Heavy or bulky items, like thicker armor and longer weapons, may take up more slots. Groups of small, identical items, like arrows or herbs, are **bundled** into the same slot at the referee's discretion. Souls are weightless motes of light, and take up no slots. As a general guideline, a slot holds around 5 pounds.

Weapons and armor also have a **quality** score. When an item reaches 0 quality, it is rendered unusable. Items have a *default 3 quality* unless otherwise noted. Each point of quality costs 10% of the item's cost to repair.

Most weapons can be categorized as **light melee** (d6 damage, 1 slot, 1 handed), **medium melee** (d8 damage, 2 slots, 1–2 handed), **heavy melee** (d10 damage, 3 slots, 2 handed), light ranged (d4 damage, 1 slot, 1 quality, 1 handed) **bow** (d6 damage, 2 slots, 2 handed), and **crossbow** (d8 damage, 3 slots, 2 handed). **Unarmed** attacks do d4 damage on unarmored targets. **Improvised** weapons, like a heavy branch or a wand meant for spellcasting, deal damage as a comparably sized weapon, but may impose a disadvantage to attack, take more slots, or have 1 quality.

Designer's Note: Quality has been standardized at "3 unless noted," and many items have been changed or removed, both for simplicity and to fit the implied setting. Arms are old and prone to deterioration; lodging is in whatever ruins you can find; food is unnecessary for those sustained by souls; fancy clothes might make an impression on the right audience, but few folk dress to impress anymore; and there is no real economy to govern especially extravagant purchases.

Weapons

1. Cudgel	d6 damage	50s
2. Dagger	d6 damage	50s
3. Rapier	d6 damage	50s
4. Whip	d6 damage	50s
5. Battle axe	d8 damage, 2 slots	100s
6. Broadsword	d8 damage, 2 slots	100s
7. Flail	d8 damage, 2 slots	100s
8. Mace	d8 damage, 2 slots	100s
9. Quarterstaff	d8 damage, 2 slots	100s
10. Saber	d8 damage, 2 slots	100s
11. Spear	d8 damage, 2 slots	100s
12. Great sword	d10 damage, 3 slots	200s
13. Halberd	d10 damage, 3 slots	200s
14. Lucerne hammer	d10 damage, 3 slots	200s
15. Maul	d10 damage, 3 slots	200s
16. Sling	d4 damage	20s
17. Throwing knives ×10	d4 damage	20s
18. Bow	d6 damage, 2 slots	150s
19. Crossbow	d8 damage, 3 slots	300s
20. Noble weapon	any weapon above, but with a bonus to damage, quality, or slots	×100s

Clothing & Armor

1. Rags, effectively naked	+0 ARMOR	Free
2. Robes, scholar or clergy	+1 ARMOR, 1 quality	5s
3. Work attire, rough tunic	+1 ARMOR, 1 quality	5s
4. Winter clothes, furs	+1 ARMOR, 1 quality	5s
5. Travel garb, cloak, boots	+1 ARMOR, 1 quality	5s
6. Leather armor	+2 ARMOR, 2 slots	60s
7. Brigandine	+3 ARMOR, 3 slots	500s
8. Chainmail	+4 ARMOR, 4 slots	1200s
9. Half plate armor	+5 ARMOR, 5 slots	4000s
10. Full plate armor	+6 ARMOR, 6 slots	8000s
11. Helmet	+1 ARMOR, 1 quality	40s
12. Shield	+1 ARMOR, 1 quality	40s

Tools & Supplies

1. Ammunition ×20	arrows, bolts	20s
2. Animal trap	d6 damage, snares	50s
3. Bottle, flask, or vial	+ watertight stopper	5s
4. Chain	10ft	10s
5. Crowbar		10s
6. Grappling hook	requires rope	10s
7. Hammer		10s
8. Locksmith tools		100s
9. Lantern	requires oil; see: Alchemy	30s
10. Mirror	handheld, polished metal	200s
11. Net		10s
12. Pickaxe		10s
13. Rope	20ft	10s
14. Saw		10s
15. Shovel		10s
16. Spikes ×12	also stakes, nails	5s
17. Spyglass		1000s
18. Tinderbox		10s
19. Torches ×5	1 hour each	1s
20. Twine	300 ft	5s

Alchemy & Spellcasting

1. Acid	−d4 quality or HP	100s
2. Adamantine dust	repair 1 quality; < 1 slot	50s
3. Blast powder	d8 area damage	100s
4. Cockatrice wishbone	cure all toxins, curses, etc.	50s
5. Healing herbs	heal d6 HP; < 1 slot	10s
6. Holy water	d12 damage vs. unholy	500s
7. Primordial clay	rearrange ability points	1000s
8. Oil	fuel, or d6 ongoing damage	10s
9. Poison	save vs. d6 ongoing damage	100s
10. Magic ring	roll d10 on "50 Magic Items"	1000s
11. Spirit salt	regain d4 stamina; < 1 slot	100s
12. Spell text	teaches 1 spell	1000s

Playing the Game

Abilities

Each of the six abilities is used in different circumstances.

- **Strength (STR):** Used for melee attacks and saves requiring physical power, like bending bars, lifting gates, etc.
- **Dexterity (DEX):** Used for ranged attacks and saves requiring reflexes and coordination, like acrobatics, climbing, sneaking, balancing, etc.
- **Constitution (CON):** Used for saves to resist poison, sickness, cold, etc. A PC has as many item slots as their CON defense, as much stamina as their unused item slots, and as many HP as their CON bonus + d6 (or 3) per level.
- **Intelligence (INT):** Used for saves requiring precision and concentration, such as resisting magical effects, recalling lore, crafting objects, tinkering with machinery, etc. PCs can prepare as many spells as their INT bonus.
- **Wisdom (WIS):** Used for saves requiring perception, intuition, and patience, such as tracking, navigating, standing watch, detecting illusions, etc. Wisdom is also used to determine initiative order in combat.
- **Charisma (CHA):** Used for saves requiring confidence and social skills, such as persuasion, deception, interrogation, intimidation, provocation, etc. PCs can return from death as many times as their CHA defense, and a slain PC can add their CHA bonus to one roll by an ally each round until they resurrect.

In addition, PCs have an ARMOR score indicating defensive capabilities in armed combat. It acts like an ability score, but is determined by clothing, armor, and/or shields.

Designer's Note: Dexterity governs ranged and light weapon attacks due to common associations from soulslike games and beyond. Intelligence governs spell preparation separately from item slots in a nod to soulslike games, and to encourage specialization over time. Wisdom and Charisma are often ignored as "dump stats" in favor of abilities with more combat utility, but now feature uses that should help keep PCs alive.

Saving Throws

If a character attempts something where the outcome is uncertain and failure has consequences, they make a **saving throw**, or "**save**." To make a save, add the relevant ability bonus to a d20 roll. If the total is **greater than 15**, the character succeeds. If not, they fail.

If the save is opposed by another character, then instead of aiming to exceed 15, the side doing the rolling must get a total greater than the opposing character's relevant ability defense in order to succeed. If they fail, the opposing side succeeds. This type of save is called an **opposed save**. Note that it doesn't matter which side does the rolling, since the odds of success remain the same.

Example: Namora casts an attack spell at a thief. This is resolved as an opposed save using Namora's INT versus the thief's DEX. The thief may roll and add their DEX bonus, hoping to exceed Namora's INT defense, or Namora may roll and add her INT bonus, hoping to exceed the thief's DEX defense.

If situational factors make any roll significantly easier or harder, the referee may grant the roll **advantage** or **disadvantage**. With advantage, roll an extra die and disregard the worst result. With disadvantage, roll an extra die and disregard the best. Having both cancels out both.

Reactions

When the PCs encounter an NPC whose initial disposition to the party is not obvious, the referee may roll 2d6 and consult the following table.

2	3-5	6-8	9-11	12
Hostile	Unfriendly	Unsure	Talkative	Helpful

Combat

In combat, characters take **turns** declaring their actions. Determine **initiative** order by having players attempt a WIS save. Those who succeed act before all enemies; those who fail act after all enemies. When every character has taken a turn, a new **round** begins; reroll initiative.

On their turn, a character **move** a short distance based on their speed (usually 40ft), and take a **combat action**—e.g., attacking, casting a spell, moving again, attempting a stunt,

or whatever else the referee agrees makes sense. If the PCs have the initiative, the referee may telegraph enemies' intended actions so PCs can anticipate and act accordingly.

Designer's Note: I put initiative in PCs' hands, mostly to give Wisdom an important use. If you prefer all PCs to act at once, choose a leader to roll each round, or require half to pass their save for all to go before enemies.

Attacking and **defending** are handled like an opposed save (as in the example above) between the attacker's STR (if using a melee weapon up close) or DEX (if using a ranged weapon out of arm's reach) and the defender's ARMOR.

Designer's Note: At the referee's discretion, attackers might be allowed to use Dexterity for light, 1-slot weapons that require speed or precision more than force, like rapiers and whips, in keeping with common convention from soulslike games.

On a hit, the attacker rolls their weapon's **damage** die and deducts the damage roll from the target's **hit points** (HP). They may add a bonus damage die if they exploited the target's **weakness** (such as a blunt weapon vs. a skeleton). In addition, if the attacker rolls a natural 20 (a **critical hit**) or the defender rolls a natural 1, the defender's armor loses 1 point of quality and they take an additional die of damage (of the weapon's type). If the attacker rolls a natural 1 (a **critical miss**) or the defender rolls a natural 20, the attacker's weapon loses 1 point of quality.

Morale

When monsters and NPCs face more danger than they were expecting, the referee may make a **morale roll** by rolling 2d6 and comparing the result to the NPC's morale rating (usually between 5 and 9). If the roll is higher than the rating, the NPC will attempt to flee, retreat, or parley. Morale rolls can be triggered by defeating half of an enemy group, defeating its leader, reducing a lone enemy to half HP, or other effects at the referee's discretion.

NPC companions also make morale rolls when they face extraordinary danger or strongly disapprove of the PCs' actions, such as holding out on promised rewards or displaying mismatched ethical principles. Morale may also be improved by treating companions well and rewarding them more generously.

Stunts

Stunts are combat maneuvers such as stunning, shoving, disarming, tripping, sundering armor, and so on. They are resolved with an opposed save. They may not cause damage directly, but may do so indirectly (for example, pushing an enemy off of a ledge). The referee is the final arbiter as to what stunts can be attempted in a given situation.

Designer's Note: *Knave allows players to forego the bonus die from advantage to take an extra stunt action on their turn; you may wish to use this if you don't use stamina for "extra effort," but I removed the rule to avoid too many rules exceptions.*

Stamina

PCs start with as much **stamina** as the number of item slots they leave empty. Stamina has two general uses: **casting spells** (1 stamina per spell level), and augmenting ordinary actions with **extra effort** (1 stamina per effect). What constitutes "extra effort" is open to interpretation and the referee's discretion: Players ought to describe what they want to do, and when that exceeds what they could normally accomplish in a single turn or roll, the referee can indicate that this costs stamina. Though this is not an exhaustive list, appropriate example effects include:

- **Gain advantage:** Dive in light armor or raise a shield to avoid an attack; throw sand into a foe's face so they're distracted as you follow up with an attack.
- **Bonus stunt:** Strike so hard with a war hammer that it damages and pushes the target; disarm while parrying.
- **Extra damage die:** Wind up while gripping a weapon in both hands to hit harder; attack with both main-hand and off-hand weapons at once.
- **Extra targets:** Swing a great sword to hit multiple foes; fling a handful of throwing knives.
- **Extra move:** Use hit-and-run tactics with light weapons and armor; just as the axe falls, shove your ally out of the way with your shield, defending in their place.

Typically, only 1 stamina can be spent on a given effect each turn; a PC could potentially attack with advantage and apply an extra damage die, given a compelling description, but not deal two extra dice of damage.

PCs regain all lost stamina by resting awhile in a safe haven. Dropping items will increase their *maximum* stamina, but this does not increase total stamina held before resting.

Designer's Note: *Stamina is meant to emulate soulslike games by encouraging tactical, colorful combat, and giving would-be wizards and thieves an excuse to wear lightweight gear. Reduce a PC's maximum stamina only when they pick up an item long enough to add it to their character sheet. When players inevitably ask to use stamina to reroll or make extra attacks, this might be allowed at increased cost, at the referee's discretion.*

Hest

Resting for awhile in a **safe haven** restores all lost hit points and stamina, and offers an opportunity to prepare new spells and advance in level. Brief breaks in risky places offer an opportunity to consume curatives, but don't permit enough time or tranquility for other recuperation.

Designer's Note: *The risen dead are presumed to not necessarily benefit from food or sleep, and combat is intended to be deadlier with less frequent healing and lower stakes for death. What counts as a "safe haven" is up to the referee, but might include an isolated village, a shrine on sacred ground, or the lair of a legendary enemy felled by the PCs (at least until other locals realize the former inhabitant is no longer in residence).*

Death

When a character reaches 0 HP, they die. If it's a PC, increase their death count by 1. If a killed PC's allies are still in immediate danger, their spirit can inspire them for a short time: Once per round, the killed PC's player adds their CHA bonus (or a d10, their call) to any roll made by another player, before or after the roll.

Once a killed PC's allies are out of immediate danger, compare the PC's deaths to their CHA defense. If their deaths are higher, their soul is lost. Have the player make a new character to be introduced as soon as possible.

If a killed PC's deaths do not exceed their CHA defense, they are **resurrected** as soon as the group is out of immediate danger, either rising bodily where they fell, or mysteriously reappearing at their side. They return with all their equipment, and full HP and stamina, but their souls are left behind if their allies abandoned their body. The player also

rolls for **decay** on the *Traits* page, or describes a mark fitting the cause of death (such as *Charred* by dragon breath). Decay is permanent and cumulative, and may or may not have mechanical relevance at the referee's discretion (e.g., a skeletal PC resisting poison, but weaker to blunt attacks).

When PCs slay an enemy, any souls the enemy carried fall to the ground, or spread out evenly between all members of the group, including those felled in battle. This may or may not yield *their* soul, however—only those most faded by deaths and most weighed down with corruption are guaranteed forfeit. As such, killing an enemy may not dispatch them permanently.

Designer's Note: *Death may be frequent (but temporary) due to a greater emphasis on combat than other OSR games, so unconsciousness rules have been removed, and a new rule for "spirit" has been added to help keep all players involved. (It's up to your group whether the "spirit" is literal or figurative.) Feel free to tweak how death works to meet the needs of your group and/or your setting; killed PCs might reappear at the last safe haven where the group rested, or might simply sit bolt upright with a dramatic gasp for air after only a round of lying dead.*

Advancement & Souls

While in a safe haven, a PC can gain a **level** by subsuming 1000 × their current level in souls, deducting these from the total carried indicated on their character sheet. Upon gaining a level, a PC gains these benefits:

- **Ability increase:** Raise the defense and bonus of 3 different abilities of the player's choice.
- **HP increase:** Roll as many d6 as their level and add their CON bonus (or just multiply their level by 3), raising HP by 1 if the total is not higher than before.
- **Recall:** The PC regains a memory—one of their own, or perhaps someone else's. The player can make one up, roll for a memory prompt on the *Traits* page, ask the referee for one, or declare what it is at some later point to gain an advantage on a single roll.

The faded souls traded as coin pale in comparison with the souls of the corrupted demigods and colossal demons who rule the lands. Such **legendary souls** can be consumed to grant a 1 level instantly, but this risks **corruption**: Roll a d100, and if it is below the PC's highest ability or level

(whichever is higher), the referee takes control of the character to reintroduce to their former allies as a monster. For this reason, the most powerful monsters' souls are sometimes bound into powerful artifacts, preventing their resurrection or the temptation to devour them.

Likewise, upon gaining each level above 10 or each ability bonus increase over +10, the PC visibly grows in stature, and the player makes a corruption roll as above. Moreover, when a PC who has exceeded these limits dies, their soul is too heavy to quickly return to the body, making it easy to seize their soul and prevent resurrection.

Designer's Note: *Souls as both coin and experience offers an in-game explanation for the classic "XP for gold" advancement mechanism. Increasingly higher XP requirements compared to Knave encourage hunting increasingly powerful foes. You could cap PC level and abilities at 10 as Knave does, but offering it as a risky option evokes themes of the corrupting influence of power, and offers one explanation for why the fallen heroes of yore encountered in soulslike games tend to be so darn big.*

Spellcasting

PCs might find **spell texts** in their travels. By absorbing soul-memory-residue, a text can be learned instantly (and the object itself discarded) by a single PC, but this renders it useless to others. Alternatively, a text can be entrusted to an NPC mentor capable of teaching it to others.

Any PC can learn any number of spell of their own level or lower, but a PC only can only **prepare** as many spells at once as their INT bonus. Prepared spells can be **cast** as an action (or quicker, if so noted), as often as desired, by spending the spell's level in stamina while the caster has at least one open hand or a spellcasting implement in hand. Preparation demands deep concentration and lengthy rituals only possible in a safe haven.

Designer's Note: *Limiting how many spells a PC can have prepared, in combination with spells only learnable by one PC, should encourage specialization and variety, and cut down on time lost to shuffling inventory between PCs.*

When a spell negatively affects another creature, the caster makes an **opposed save** with their spellcasting ability against the defender's relevant ability—usually DEX for ranged attack spells, CON for life-draining spells, INT for

mind-altering spells, or WIS for illusions. Success reduces or negates the spell's effects.

Spells belong to three traditions, each using a different **spellcasting ability** for opposed saves: The **wizardry** of the Academy requires Intelligence to make sense of arcane formulae; divine **theurgy** requires Wisdom to apply the teachings of Church scriptures; and the ancient rites of disparate cultures branded **witchcraft** by the Church use Charisma to invoke natural and otherworldly spirits. Lists of "level-less" spells for each tradition are listed later—all accessible at level 1, but able to be cast at higher levels for greater effect by investing more stamina. A referee could substitute another fantasy RPG's spell list for these if desired, including Knave's list of "100 Level-less Spells."

In the spells listed in this document, "**L**" is the level the spell is cast at, which need not be its maximum; a character can choose to cast at lower levels to save stamina. An **item** is anything able to be lifted with one hand, and an **object** is anything (or anyone) up to human size. Having an ongoing effect **disrupted** means the target of the spell makes a roll or takes damage. Unless otherwise noted, ongoing effects last up to $L \times 10$ minutes or until voluntarily canceled, and have a range of up to 40 feet.

Designer's Note: *Dividing spells into three traditions is meant to give mental abilities additional uses, and encourage further specialization so it's clearer who gets first dibs on which spells. If you prefer a unified spell list, I recommend using Intelligence for all casting, as it doesn't have many other critical uses.*

Monsters

All monsters from OSR bestiaries should work as-is with no major conversion needed. Here are some guidelines.

Hit Dice/Hit Points: Use d6s for monster hit dice to avoid tedious HP attrition, or multiply HD by 3 for HP.

Armor/Defense: Monster AC (if ascending) can be used as defense. If the AC is descending, subtract it from 19 (if it is from Original D&D or Basic/Expert D&D) or from 20 (if it is from Advanced D&D) to find its ascending equivalent.

Attack Bonus: Any attack bonus given is unchanged. If an attack bonus is not given, assume that it is the same as the

monster's number of hit dice, within reason. If THAC0 is given, subtract from 19 or 20, as above with AC.

Damage: Damage remains the same. For improvised monsters, aim for average damage to be HD + 1.

Morale: Morale rating remains the same.

Saves: Assume that monsters have ability bonuses equal to their level, with the corresponding ability defenses.

XP: If a monster includes an XP reward, it indicates how many souls *each* player could seize from it. In the absence of other guidance, grant $d20 \times \text{HD}$ souls for 1–5 HD monsters (+100 for each special ability), and $d100 \times \text{HD}$ souls for higher HD monsters (+500 for each special ability.)

Refereeing

Encourage player problem-solving over PC abilities. Rather than asking to "roll Wisdom to search the room," ask them how they search—tapping walls, feeling for drafts. Only roll when there's something to lose, like finding the secret door *before* an enemy patrol shows up.

Share more information than strangers in a strange land could know: the names of legendary enemies and ancient sites, the powers of magical items, the images from well-drawn dungeon maps (potentially with redactions or "inaccuracies"). You may be surprised by how much you "just know" with the memories of a thousand dead lining your pockets. But don't get carried away: If something wouldn't fit on a video game loading screen, it's too much.

Seed rumors for PCs to look into, encouraging exploration, facing legendary monsters, gathering souls, perhaps even changing the world. Examples:

- The gates of the underworld can be closed once more by whoever possesses the souls of the Rulers of Old.
- Whoever sits on the Blackened Throne of the Damned can command the dead and remake this world.
- The smithy will reward whoever rescues her brother, but only upon his return. ("If I gave free gear to every would-be hero who promised to save him, I'd be out of business *and* out of brothers.")
- The rest of the world isn't like this. Travel further, and you can escape this nightmare.

Treasure

Cherurgy Spells

1. **Abjure.** *L* creatures must move away from you on their turn and cannot attack you.
2. **Commandment.** Target must obey a command of up to *L* words that harms neither target nor innocents.
3. **Confessional.** Sense (or compel, vs. save) truthfulness for *L* statements a target makes.
4. **Divine Emissary.** Increase a reaction roll by *L* steps.
5. **Fortitude.** Touch to grant + *L* ARMOR.
6. **Guidance.** Once a day, ask a question to receive a vision in *L* words.
7. **Holy Light.** Glow with pure sunlight. Cast at level 2 to temporarily blind those who look at you directly.
8. **Last Rites.** Cast in reaction to a deathblow on an ally; they survive up to *L* rounds, or after losing *L* HP, whichever comes first.
9. **Lay on Hands.** Touch to restore *L* d6 HP.
10. **Levitation.** Float *L* ft off the ground, and slowly glide instead of falling.
11. **Might.** Touch a creature to grant +*L* d6 to their next Strength roll (and if a melee attack, damage roll).
12. **Oath.** Make a promise to or agreement with a willing party. Specify a penalty for breaking it. The penalty befalls upon whoever breaks the oath first, if ever.
13. **Purify.** Gesture to clear a person or object of all toxins and diseases. Cast at level 4 to remove curses.
14. **Regeneration.** Touch to heal 1 permanent injury, such as restoring a lost limb or organ.
15. **Sanctuary.** Teleport *L* nearby allies to a safe haven where you have rested. Casting takes 2 rounds.
16. **Smite.** Arrow-range lightning attack, d8 damage. Targets cannot benefit from metal armor.
17. **Sun Rays.** Deal d6 damage to *L* enemies.
18. **Thunderclap.** All others in earshot save WIS or are deafened and can't take actions until your next turn.
19. **Tranquility.** No one can cause harm while within (or to any within) 40ft of you for *L* rounds.
20. **Weather Prayer.** Alter general weather conditions nearby, but without more precise control.

Wizardry Spells

1. **Assemblage.** Instantly dismantle (or repair, given replacement materials) an *item*.
2. **Astral Arrow.** Arrow-range attack, *L* d6 damage.
3. **Astral Body.** Step out of your body as a luminous spirit that can float with speed $L \times 10$ ft. Ignore physical attacks; other incoming attacks can *disrupt* spell.
4. **Cosmic Binding.** Freeze an *object* in time and space. It cannot be affected in any way for the spell's duration.
5. **Disguise.** Resemble any comparably sized *object* for the spell duration. Cancel if *disrupted*.
6. **Dying Star.** You and creatures in line of sight take *L* d10 damage. Creatures that save DEX to take cover take half damage.
7. **Figment.** Conjure an illusory *object* with *L* details.
8. **Hedge Magic.** Create a momentary, harmless, obviously supernatural effect (e.g., make voices echo; cause a brief gust of air).
9. **Illumination.** Move a floating light as you command.
10. **Invisibility.** Make a target invisible for *L* rounds, or $L - 3$ minutes. Cancel if *disrupted*.
11. **Locate.** Know the path to a person or object you can name and picture for up to *L* minutes.
12. **Precognition.** Roll up to *L* d20. Spend these anytime until you rest to replace any roll any character makes.
13. **Psychic Force.** Move *L items* with your mind as an action on this turn. Double the cost to move *objects*.
14. **Read Mind.** Hear or transmit thoughts with someone nearby for up to $L \times 10$ minutes.
15. **Refract Self.** Split into *L* bodies sharing thoughts, HP, and stamina. Each can move on your turn, but only one acts. When one is hurt, all are hurt. When you cancel the effect, decide which body is now you.
16. **Second Sight.** Sense magic, including illusions.
17. **Sharpened Starlight.** Conjure a melee weapon of pale light (*d8 damage, 0 slots*) only you can wield.
18. **Transmute.** Convert *L* cubic feet of inanimate material into a similar material (e.g., lead to gold).
19. **Void Step.** Cast as a move to teleport $L \times 10$ ft, or cast as an action at level 7 to teleport anywhere you've ever been. Anyone can follow within 3 seconds.
20. **Warding.** Draw a line that prevents any creature or effect from crossing. Effect ends early if you cross it.

Witchcraft Spells

1. **Animate.** Make an inanimate *object* move and obey commands (e.g., rope slithers, wicker effigies walk).
2. **Charm.** *L* creatures believe you to be a friend. Afterward, they realize what you did.
3. **Darkness.** Shape inky shadow, blotting out light.
4. **Earthquake.** Shakes ground violently for *L* rounds.
5. **Frenzy.** Make a creature attack indiscriminately at an advantage, defending at a disadvantage.
6. **Icy Grip.** Touch to freeze an object brittle, or to paralyze a target until you let go or they save on their turn.
7. **Jinx.** Roll up to *L* d8 and select a creature. Spend d8s to penalize its rolls or add to damage it takes.
8. **Overgrowth.** Issue a command to living plants (e.g., *bind them; take shape of...*).
9. **Malediction.** Strike *L* creatures with a seemingly natural impairment (e.g., blindness, dizziness, pain).
10. **Metamorphose.** Transform a creature wholly or partly into a mundane animal for *L* rounds, or $L - 4$ days. The target's mind and equipment are unaffected.
11. **Miasma.** Conjure dark cloud that causes coughing and forces ongoing saves vs. d6 damage while inhaled.
12. **Mist Veil.** Conjure fog or mist to obscure visibility, or pull close around yourself to block *L* fire damage.
13. **Petrification.** Turn a creature to stone for $L \times 10$ minutes. Cast at level 6 to make permanent.
14. **Possession.** Control a target up to level *L* that meets your gaze until it saves on its turn. Take actions for it on both your turns. Meanwhile, your body sleeps.
15. **Scry.** Look into a reflection to observe a person or place you name.
16. **Sleep.** Put *L* creatures into a light sleep.
17. **Swarm.** Locusts, rats, bats, or other tiny creatures pour from your clothes or mouth.
18. **Summon.** Summon a named demon; d4 names are included with the text, each with abilities and spells determined by the GM. It follows your commands literally, and will turn on you if possible. Make a contested CHA save to banish without freeing it.
19. **Water Shaping.** Control the flow of liquid water (e.g., parting a river) for *L* rounds.
20. **Witch Fire.** Conjure fire in an open hand, or throw to attack for d6 damage to clustered targets.

50 Magic Items

1. **Ring of the Archmage.** Stamp melted wax with this ring to store a spell you can cast, targeting anyone who breaks the seal. Includes 5 candles (1 slot).
2. **Ring of the Breakable Bond.** A gold ring. When killed in battle, your tangible spirit emerges, fully equipped and with full HP. Give in to resurrection or heal your body to reenter it. If you *ever* willingly abandon an ally in need, the ring breaks irreparably.
3. **Ring of the Eagle Eye.** See as far as if you were using a spyglass. Add a d6 to long-range attack rolls.
4. **Ring of the Ghostcatcher.** Appear translucent.
5. **Ring of the Loyal.** Wearer disappears, summoned to fulfill an oath, when their player leaves the room to bring others food or drink. 2 in 3 chance of returning with another *Treasure* until 3 have been collected.
6. **Ring of Rejuvenation.** When you have a moment to catch a breath, if you have 0 stamina, gain 1 stamina.
7. **Ring of Ruin.** Subtract 1 quality from your weapon deal an extra d12 damage on an attack.
8. **Ring of the Stranger.** Appear unrecognizable as you.
9. **Ring of the Vicious Mongoose.** On a successful hand-to-hand attack, you may grapple automatically.
10. **Ring of the Wily Serpent.** While you carry only 1-slot items or lighter, you can defend using DEX.
11. **Ash Wand.** Grants +1 to wizardry spellcasting saves per stamina spent in casting. May use your INT bonus in place of your level for spellcasting purposes.
12. **Basilisk Tooth.** Carved into an enchanted dagger (d6 damage). Petrifies on a critical hit or max damage.
13. **Cryptic Prophecy.** When an ally rolls a critical hit or maximum damage against a named enemy, you may utter, "*Look! Just as was foretold!*" The target dies. 1 use.
14. **Dark River Water.** Drink to erase memories. 1 use.
15. **Death's Head Buckle.** Given a clear shot, enemies will attack you over allies. (Remind referee as needed.)
16. **Diabolist's Vestments.** Improve reaction rolls with demons by 1 step, or grant such a roll at all.
17. **Dragon Idol.** Command word etched on bottom covers your body in scales and contorts your features to become more draconic (+1 ARMOR; spend 1 stamina for d6 area fire damage) until you die or idol breaks. Prevents wearing armor or speaking very clearly.
18. **Demon Magistrate's Gavel.** A massive hammer (d12 damage, 4 slots). Knocks down a target on a hit.
19. **Golden Fruit.** Eat to clear decay and reset deaths to 0.
20. **Gravestone Chip.** When you or an ally dies, you may choose to resurrect wherever you leave this behind.
21. **Hands of Saint Regulus.** Replace your hands with these to make your unarmed attacks deal d8 damage, with advantage against unholy targets.
22. **Iron Locket.** Store carried souls inside to resurrect with them. Must repair to reuse after resurrection.
23. **Jade Pig.** Figurine that fits in the palm of your hand. Toss at ground to transform it into a real, ornery pig (1 HD, d4 damage bite), with no particular attachment to you. Transforms back to jade if lowered to 0 HP.
24. **Jesiah's Hammer and Tongs.** Tongs get +d6 to grapple by the tongue. Hammer deals d6 damage, or d20 to a target who tells a lie while grappled by tongs.
25. **Kingfisher Brooch.** 1 stamina to snatch an item from air or water, or catch a projectile; no roll needed.
26. **Lodestone Bracelet.** Pull an unattended ferrous item to you as an action; save with DEX to catch safely.
27. **Lost soul.** Separated from its owner somehow, but a bright glow suggests some awareness. It tugs gently in the direction of its remains; can be returned to a grateful owner, or subsumed for +1 to any ability.
28. **Many-notched Bow.** Can fire up to as many arrows at once as your level, spread out over an area.
29. **Marble Sepulcher.** Contains 41,343 souls; siphoning any makes mortal enemies of a holy order dedicated to preserving souls from being traded or subsumed.
30. **Mourner's Bell.** Forces incorporeal beings to solidify.
31. **Murderer's Glass Eye.** Replace one of your own eyes with it. Squint at someone as they speak to sense whether they mean to kill you or innocents.
32. **Papery Armor.** Oddly thin plate suit, with a helmet that sits like a paper hat (+7 ARMOR, 1 slot, 1 quality).
33. **Pendant.** Effect unknown, but rumored to possess great powers.
34. **Phantasm Larva.** Hold with tongue on roof of mouth to hear nearby thoughts as ongoing murmuring. Make a WIS save to make out one "voice," or to not swallow when you take damage.
35. **Pilgrim's Walking Stick.** Use WIS to attack/defend (d8 damage). Max stamina raises by 1 while in hand.
36. **Rod of Office.** Save CHA vs. INT to command human-like target to kneel, lay down arms, or flee.
37. **Iron Key.** Permanently lock or unlock a door. 1 use.
38. **Sacrificial Dagger.** A black, wavy blade (d6 damage). With a free hand, you may spend HP in place of stamina to cast witchcraft spells. May use your CHA bonus in place of your level for spellcasting purposes.
39. **Saint's Ashes.** Each pinch used counts as 1 stamina toward casting a theurgy spell (up to 3 pinches), *or* throw all 3 pinches on a fire while repairing an ordinary broken weapon, granting it a permanent +d6 on attacks and damage vs. unholy enemies.
40. **Sacred Medallion.** Add your WIS bonus to any HP you restore with theurgy. May use your WIS bonus in place of your level for spellcasting purposes.
41. **Septifocals.** Seven-lensed spectacles with gold wire frames. Spend 1 stamina to see a target's level, HP, and number of souls carried.
42. **Silver Wings.** Worn on back; they move on their own to deflect attacks (+2 ARMOR, 2 slots, 1 quality).
43. **Spacious Satchel.** Can stow an impossible number of 1-slot or smaller items. Requires rooting around for several minutes with decent lighting to retrieve items.
44. **Starmetal.** Graft into an ordinary weapon to increase damage 1 die size; count its damage as magical. 1 use.
45. **Summoning Stone.** Scratch a circle with a 50/50 chance to summon 1 spirit (d10 HD) of random *Background*. Spirits under 6 HD are helpful; others are evil.
46. **Tiny Steeds.** Quartet of wooden figurines (1 slot). Command to grow into a mount (2 HD) or turn back.
47. **Titan's Finger.** The bound soul of a corrupted hero of old, fashioned into a blunt sword (d12 damage, 4 slots). Spend 1 stamina on hit to curl it around target.
48. **Trisagonist Skull.** Six-eye-socketed, pearlescent. Hold aloft to make it thrum with song, bathing area in white light as all carried souls nearby spiral upward. Souls may be intercepted within 1 round before they fly skyward, after which skull crumbles to dust.
49. **Waxen Hand.** Can be taught spells by rubbing fingers over pages. When you roll a 1 with it (or whenever you choose), it casts a spell at random. Fingers move when not in use, making arcane signs.
50. **Xeno's Grimoire.** Contains d4 + 1 random spells. One can be learned instantly; others require a mentor.