PREPARE TO DIE

WHAT IS DEATHBRINGER?

Deathbringer is a streamlined, grimdark version of the world's most popular tabletop roleplaying game. It is not a game so much as a "kit"—a toolbox of hacks to create a fast-paced, grittier game.

These rules can be used by themselves or imported into any 5E game or OSR retro-clone. Feel free to pick and choose which rules you use. Think of Deathbringer as the secret sauce on your RPG burger.

WHY IS DEATHBRINGER?

We enjoy RPGS where death is a real possibility and danger lurks around every corner. We like PCs who are gritty antiheroes struggling to survive in a hostile world. We also like games that feel less like a tactical exercise and more like movies—where players use natural language like: "I sneak up behind him and stab him in the kidney," as opposed to, "I move three squares and flank him for an opportunity attack."

In Deathbringer, you are not limited by what is written on your character sheet. Deathbringer Dice make it possible for any character to swing from a chandelier, smite an enemy, or turn a leg of mutton into an improvised weapon—because every character has a right to kill someone with a leg of mutton.

Enough talk! Go, and may your death be one worth remembering.



A RULES-LIGHT TTRPG

SET IN A WORLD of GRIM & PERILOUS ADVENTURE

by DAN MASTERS

THANKS TO BRANDISH GILHELM, DM SCOTTY, BEN MILTON, TOM MOLDVAY, DAVID BLACK, GRAEME DAVIS, DAVE ARNESON, GARY GYGAX

FOLD, YOU FOOLS

A MEAGER HOW-TO

Save space, fold things fast, and tuck away your Deathbringer rules in your go-to journal with this tri-fold—I mean DIE-FOLD—rules brief.

Print pages 2-3 of this PDF, double sided, preferably on heavyweight paper. Then, fold on thedotted lines as shown. The streets will run red with your dire work, and fun will be had by all.



CHARACTER SHEETS

Page 4 features a Deathbringer character sheet. This terrifyingly organized array of facts and figures will be your only lifeline in the doom-filled darkness ahead, so just use a pen and a blowtorch.

OTHER STUFF

For more pathetic downloads, videos, and other futile materials to fight back the shadow, use these links, and may all your rolls be 20s!

Dungeoncraft and Professor DM on youtube.
Dungeoncraft Patreon Page

Dungeoncraft Facebook Group

CRITICAL MISCAST

1-10: Fizzle - Spell fails. Ghostly laughter fills the room.
11-15: Backfire - Caster takes the damage or effect.
16-19: Disaster - e.g. Caster ages d20 years, loses a level, gains a mutation, summons a hostile monster, disintegrates all armor with 100 feet, hits the wrong target for full damage, or something equally horrifying.
20: Catastrophic - Caster explodes in a shower of gore.

WEAPONS

D2: Fist, kick, headbutt
D4: Bone, club, dagger, improvised weapon
D6: Mace, short bow, spear, staff
D8: Battle axe, long bow, rapier, sword, warhammer
D10: Crossbow, two-handed sword

ARMOR

Light:	+1 DEF, doublet, helm, leather jacket	*10-20gp*
Medium:	+2 DEF, Gambeson, scale, studded leather, chainmail bikini	*50-100gp*
	+3 DEF, Brigandine or full chain	*100-200gp*
Heavy:	+4 DEF, Full field plate	*1000+gp*

KILL SHOTS

1-5: Agonizing death. Your attack inflicts grim wounds to vital organs. Victim dies in d4 rounds.
6-10: Clean Kill. Your decisive, devastating attack drops your opponent with quiet simplicity.
11-15: Brutal Doom. You overkill your target with force, crushing bone, spraying blood—a real mess.
16-19: Splatter & gore. Your attack renders the victim unrecognizable, smashed to a pulp or hewn in two.
20: Deathbringer. So powerful is your kill, a nearby enemy is also hit. Enemies who view such a kill are terrified and intimidated.

IMPROVEMENT

1-4xp per session. Level up at 10xp. 100gp=1xp
When you level up, gain an additional Hit Die and a Deathbringer Die.
Once your reach 20+hp, roll new HD with disadvantage. No re-rolls!
Raise any ability score by +1 on levels 3, 5, 7, & 9.

COMBAT

Rounds are 6 seconds. Group initiative every round: d6, highest roll wins. Ties=simultaneous attack. Players take turns clockwise from the GM.

Everyone must declare actions and Magic Users must declare their spells before initiative is rolled. If the Magic User loses initiative and is successfully attacked, the spell fails.

PCs can move up to 20 feet and attack in one round.

No bonus actions.

Stunts: maneuvers such as pushing, disarming, tripping, blinding, etc. The GM rules whether the stunt is possible and if the player has advantage, disadvantage, or makes a clean roll. If the roll succeeds, the stunt is successful.

0 HP is unconscious. Negative HP=DEAD.

SPELLS

Use any OSR or 5e spells you like—but the PCs must find them through exploration.
DC 10 to cast. Saving throws are 15.

CORRUPTION

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Gain +1 when you commit and evil deed or roll Nat 1 when spellcasting. At 10 Corruption you have lost all humanity and become a monster controlled by the GM.

HEALING

Use a DD to stitch up wounds after combat.
Heal HP = CON every day of complete bedrest.

CONVERTING SPELLS & MONSTERS

Import and monsters and spells you like from 5e/OSR games. Monsters have pure HD (no CON bonuses).
Spells do the same damage.
Magic items are virtually non-existent. Potions are rare.



DEATHBRINGER

BASICS & ABILITIES

Start out with 8 "build points." Distribute these as bonuses between your six Ability Scores, with no higher than +6 in any one Ability Score. Ability Scores range from 0 to +10.

Ex: STR +5, DEX +2, CON +1, INT 0, WIS, 0, CHA +1

STRength: Add to melee weapon attacks AND damage
DEXterity: Add to DEF, missile attacks AND damage, stealth, climbing, lockpicking, acrobatics, etc.
CONstitution: Saves v. poison, you can carry items = CON + 10, for each day of rest you regain HP=CON. Note: CON does NOT add to HP
INTelligence: Add to spellcasting rolls, history, knowledge, +1 indicates literacy
WISdom: Add to mind-based Saving Throws, searching, perception & tracking
CHArisma: Add to all reaction checks, charm, deception, intimidation, performance, persuasion.

Your Ability Score IS your proficiency bonus, skill level, and natural ability. A +1 STR means you are proficient with ALL hand weapons. A +1 DEX means you are proficient with all ranged weapons, acrobatics, climbing, stealth, etc.

HP = "Pure" Hit Dice, do not add CON

DEFense= 10+ DEX + Armor. (DEF replaces AC)

All characters are human. No one can see in the dark.
No clerics. The gods of Deathbringer are indifferent.
Spellcasters have been hunted to near-extinction.

Start with d6gp, a waterskin, and d4 days' rations.

CHARACTER CLASSES

DEATHBRINGER

Hit Dice: d10. Use any armor or weapons.
Spend a Deathbringer Die to make one extra attack.
Second attack at 5 th level.
To start: doublet, shield, 2 weapons

GRIMSCRIBE

Hit Dice= d6. Cannot wear armor.
No spell slots. Roll to cast, DC 10. On a roll of Natural 1 gain 1 Corruption and roll on the
Miscast Table. Gains spells by finding scrolls, spell books, or by having a friendly higher-level
magic user teach them to you. You are a living grimoire, must tattoo all spells on your skin.
To Start: four cantrips, two first-level spells, dagger

SCOUNDREL

Hit Dice= d8. Light armor only.
Advantage when attempting stealth, climbing, listening, lockpicking, searching, etc. +4 to hit and double damage from behind.
To Start: leather jacket, club or dagger, thieves' tools, rope, grappling hook, lucky charm.

WITCH HUNTER

Hit Dice= d8. Light armor.
Cast Detect Evil and Protection from Evil 1x per day; Turn Undead at will.
To Start: leather coat, club, crossbow, holy symbol, 6 torches.

PLAGUE DOCTOR

Hit Dice= d6. Leather armor only.
Cure Wounds once per patient per day, Cure Disease & Cure Poison 1x per day. Create d4 potions a day (1) acid splash (2) sleep (3) poison spray (4) bomb [d10] (5) healing [d6] (6) hallucinations
To Start: Leather beak mask and coat, meat cleaver, medical kit, very suspicious diploma

THIS IS HOW WE ROLL

Advantage & disadvantage for cover, low visibility, having the proper tools, etc.

Natural 20 means +d12 damage and you lower the opponent's DEF by 1.

Natural 1 is a critical failure. Quiver is empty, you are disarmed, or Critical Miscast.

DEATHBRINGER DICE

Replace class features, Skills, Feats & Inspiration with Deathbringer Dice.

Begin each session with DD equal to your level.

A player can "spend" DDs to:
(1) Add d6 to any d20 roll.
(2) Inflict an additional d6 damage on a successful hit.
(3) Absorb d6 damage.

You may use multiple DD at the same time.
DD cannot be used to alter a Nat 1 or used for initiative rolls. They are not replenished with rest but respawn at the start of a session.

Store up to 10 DD on your sheet in these slots: ☐

BACKGROUND

1 Bounty Hunter
2 Courtesan
3 Duelist
4 Executioner
5 Farmer
6 Grave Robber
7 Leech Collector
8 Mercenary
9 Minor Noble
10 Outlaw
11 Performer
12 Pit Fighter
13 Pirate/Sailor
14 Priest/nun/monk
15 Rat Catcher
16 Servant
17 Student/Scholar
18 Swineherd
19 Soldier
20 Urchin

RANDOM MISERY

1 Abandoned at birth.
2 Banished from home.
3 Betrayed by a loved one.
4 Cursed by vengeful witch.
5 Disinherited or disowned.
6 Escaped bondage or prison.
7 Fled a scandal.
8 Framed for a crime.
9 Killed someone important.
10 Left for dead.
11 Locusts ate your crops.
12 Owe someone money.
13 Pursued by the law.
14 Raised in the streets
15 Reduced to poverty.
16 Rejected by society.
17 Ruined by vice.
18 Suffering from amnesia.
19 Survived a massacre.
20 Town ravaged by plague.

STR
DEX
CON
INT
WIS
CHA

PLAYER NAME:
CHARACTER NAME:
CLASS:
LEVEL: XP:

DEFENSE
HIT POINTS
MAX
CURRENT

DEATHBRINGER DICE

SPECIAL ABILITIES

WEAPONS

ARMOR

EQUIPMENT

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10

CORRUPTION
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

CP
SP
GP

DEATHBRINGER

PLAYER NAME:

CHARACTER NAME:

CLASS:

LEVEL: XP:

DEFENSE

HIT POINTS

MAX

CURRENT

STR	▶	Melee Attack Damage Lift/Bend/Carry
DEX	▶	Ranged Attack Defense Stealth
CON	▶	Hit Points Save v. poison, heat, & cold
INT	▶	Cast Spells Knowledge Read & write
WIS	▶	Perception Searching Save vs. spells
CHA	▶	Charm Persuade Perform

DEATHBRINGER DICE

WEAPONS

ARMOR

EQUIPMENT

1
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CORRUPTION

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

SPECIAL ABILITIES

CP

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