the gobz hack rpg

you be goblins.

you are the minions of a dark master, guardians of an evil treasure, protecting it against naughty heroes ; or living in a goblin colony, defending it from orc raids and kidnapping ; or you're simply self-ruling, looting villages in the countryside and terrorizing farmers.

on your own, you're meaningless and weak. but when you mate with your horde, you fear no enemy. unfortunately, fear doesn't prevent you from being hurt.

life is hard when you're generally represented by a stat block.

this game is about playing goblins, loosely based on some rules of **the black hack**.

very important note this is a pre-beta-version. things can change.

character generation

me be goblin. me name iz sleertz.

pick a name. use a random name generator, or make up your own with as few syllables as you'll like, lots of *k's* and *r's* or *s's* and *z's*. you may add a nickname.

examples: *dribs the short, one-eyed zoits, sleertz the quick...*

your goblin has:

- d*6* initial hit points (**hp**).
- dirty, wasted clothes.
- fork, spoon, dish (rusty).

your goblin starts at level o (**lvl**). optionally, your **gm** may allow to start at *lvl* 1. see the *levelling up* section below.

gear

> *fear me sharpee kniff.*

pick two:

name	notes
clunky armor	+3 **ap** - disadvantage for physical maneuvers
fragile shield	+2 **ap** - you can't use two-handed weapons
rotten helmet	+1 **ap**
1-hand weapon	knife, spear, stick, club...
2-hand weapon	large sword, axe, hammer..
bow & quiver	usage die: d8 - 50m range, from 51-100m with disadvantage
sling	inflicts 1 **hp** damage on success - very silent
bag	can carry 10 items
rations	usage die: d8
water skin	usage die: d6
3-foot pole	
torches	usage die: d6

mind you: goblins are small and weak. the **gm** would give you a disadvantage for physical maneuvers when your goblin carries too many or too heavy items.

usage die: consumable items have a usage die, representing their quality or quantity. each time this item has been used, the player rolls its usage die. on 1-2, the dice is downgraded by one step. d8 becomes d6, d6 becomes d4, etc.
on a d4, if you roll 1-2, the item is empty, destroyed, etc.

you're singular

> *me speshal. me haz ze mightee shovel o' force.*

find your singular trait. it can be as crazy as your **gm** agrees on: a special ability, a legendary artifact, a blessing, scars, a missing limb, an infamous secret...

it may give you and advantage **or a disadvantage** on a given situation. as a guideline, it would be fair to give a "globally useful" singularity for characters with 1-4 **hp,** and a flaw to characters with 5-6 starting **hp**. but this has got to be discussed between the **gm** and the player.

action rolls

> *wadda sink? can jump da kliff?*

when it's risky, roll d20 and compare to your **current hp**+7. if it's (strictly) lower, you succeed. otherwise, you fail.

optionally, and depending on the situation, the **gm** may give a partial success if the roll equals the difficulty level.

a natural 1 is critical success. a natural 20 means blunder.

if the **gm** thinks you have an advantage, roll two dice, keep the lowest number. in case of disadvantage, roll two dice, keep the highest.

save rolls

> *gargl... — yess? — nah, not ya name, he zed "gargl". he dead.*

when the situation is desperate, if a character is poisoned, sick, taken into a trap, or is about to die (reaching zero **hp**), the **gm** may call for a *save roll*.

roll a d20. if it's *lower or equal* to **lvl**+7, you're safe. otherwise, it's a failure. (very) bad consequences happen.

it means death, most of the time.

combat

> *we be goblins! we be attaaaaaaak!*

initiative

each player with characters involved in the fight will roll a d20 and compare it to **current hp**+7. players who succeed will act before the enemies, others will act after them. attacking by surprise will give them an advantage.

important note: when three or more goblins attack the same foe, they all have an advantage for all their rolls related to the fight (including if they flee).

attack & defend

you roll (d20 + enemy level) and compare it to your **current hp**+7. when using a 2-handed weapon, it's more difficult, add +2 to your roll.

on a success, you inflict **d4** hits.
critical success inflicts **2d4** hits.
two-handed weapons inflict **d4+1** hits (**2d4+1** on a crit').
unarmed, bare-hand or improvised weapons inflict **1** hit, **2** on a critical success.

on a failure, you're hit by your ennemy. on a critical failure, damage is doubled.

since you'll be fighting classical *osr* adventurers or heroes, expect to receive from d6 to d8 or d10 damages each time you're hit.

please note that, even if your enemy is *not* in position to hit you, and you fail your roll, you're hit. in this case, damage is **d4**. have fun telling how you self-inflicted those hits.

reaching zero hp

when a character reaches zero **hp**, the player has to make a **save roll**. on a failure, the character dies. throw the character sheet away and start making a new one ; we're never out of goblins.

success would just mean that the goblin is *out of action*.

at the end of the combat scene, if nobody can heal or save the character, the goblin dies.

armor

each piece of armor acts like extra **hp**. when you're hit, they absorb the damage by their armor points (**ap**) level. but when they're reduced to zero, characters are taking damages that decreases their current **hp**.

right after the combat, if the goblin survives, all **ap** from their protection items are regenerated to their maximum.

example:
zlogo has 4 hp. he also has a helmet and a shield, so he has 3 ap.
now he gets hit by a tall warrior that deals 1d8 damages. the warrior rolls a 6. so the first 3 damage points are absorbed by the helmet and the shield, but the next 3 reduce zlago's hp to 1. zlago decides to escape the big person. once he's safe, hidden in a dark corridor, the gm announces that his ap is restored to their maximum (3), but he still only has 1 hp left.

healing

goblins don't have many **hp**, but they recover quickly (their race wouldn't have survived otherwise). they'll gain 1 **hp** per hour of *complete rest*, up to their initial **hp** score.

shamans and healing potions can help, of course.

note: shamans usually live in the colonies or near the rest of the tribe, and rarely go on adventure. the surviving goblins will have to find one if they need a shaman's healing powers. you may eventually play a shaman, if the **gm** agrees (see the "shamans" section in the optional rules below). the *healing ritual* of the shaman will work the same, whether they're a **pc**, a follower or a **npc**.

experience

goblins usually start at level 0.

if they survive from their first adventure, they reach **lvl** 1.

then, if they fulfill *two* more adventures, they'll reach **lvl** 2.
they'll probably remain at **lvl** 2 for quite some time.

then, if they survive to the **big quest,** they'll reach **lvl** 3, and they *can* retire.

optionally, you can keep on running for more adventures, it's how you'll like it. it could be fun having a very old goblin whinning at the youngsters. but there's no more **lvl** to gain, only glory.

levelling up

add +1 to your **initial hp**.

when you reach **lvl** 2, you can add a new *singularity* to your character, related to the adventures your goblin has survived to.

optional rules

horde

> *oi! oi! oi! we be hurd, we be hurd!*

goblins prefer living in small groups ; they're more comfortable when they mob. if the **gm** agrees, you can create up to d4 extra characters that compose your horde.

this number is your *maximum horde size*. it will only increase when you level up.

generally speaking, the playing character will be the chief of the small horde.

horde members

creating a horde member:

- d4 **hp,**
- can only pick *one gear,*
- *no* singularity.

you can give them a name, but are you sure they will survive long enough to be renowned?

actions & combat

actions rolls - as for the playing characters - uses **current hp+7.**

when the horde is involved in a fight, only the chief will roll for *initiative*. subsequent rolls (attack, defense, damages, saves...) will be individual. remember that goblins attacking in groups will have advantage on their rolls.

they'll recover their **hp** at the same rate than the playing characters.

authority

> *ya reely needz we attak zi fire beest? eet snailz & snotz, ya creezy!*

when the chief character wants to give horde members an order, and that they may *obviously* risk their lives, the player has to make an *action roll* to see if the horde would follow it. on a failure, the **gm** may decide what happens, or roll on the *rebellion table* below.

d8	result
1-4	the horde refuses to obey, tries to negotiate, etc.
1-4	part of the horde members will flee, others will try to negotiate
5-7	all the horde members flee
8	the horde is rebelling against the chief

chief is dead

it may happen that the chief of a horde dies. if so, the horde is disbanded. other surviving characters may try to give orders to the remaining horde. the player has to make an *action roll* to see if the horde is ready to follow this new leader. failures would be handled alike authority failures.

please note: these goblins that you have caught back will temporarily be members of your horde. as soon as the narrative allows it, they'll leave the party to return to their homes.

levelling up

each time you level up, you can add +1 horde member to your *maximum horde number*.
horde members don't level up.

hiring new members

when you're next to unaffiliated goblins, you can try to hire some of them to fill your horde up to your *maximum horde number*. the player will make an *action roll* with appropriate *advantages* or *disadvantages* for each new goblin he wants to hire. on a failure, the process stops, you can't try to hire more goblins here, you'll have to find another group of goblins, or wait a bit longer (from a few days to several weeks) to get another chance.

shamans

> *tis warm nay? – look! zshamann haz done fire to zakeetch bed! – ah. wil it curez? – nah. we be warm, zo.*

shamans are important beings in the goblin society. they usually don't go on adventure. but the **gm** can allow a player to incarnate this character class. there shouldn't be more than one shaman in the group, unless you really want to.

creating a shaman

> *blezzz! blezzz be da zshamann!*

this character has:

- d4 hit points,
- can only pick one gear, and none of which can be a weapon or an armor,
- starts with d4+*lvl* initial ritual points (**rp**),
- knows the *healing ritual* + one of those described below.

shamans **can't** lead a horde. they have a sort of authority on the other goblins, but they can't be combat leaders.

the **rp** will be spent when shamans attempt to cast a ritual. they are regenerated at the rate of 1 per hour of **complete rest**, like the **hp**.

rituals

> *be zshamann be djezture 'n speek same time.*

rituals have to be prepared. it takes one full round to pronounce the formula and make the appropriate gestures. during this round, the shaman **can't walk or run** and shouldn't be disturbed by anybody or anything, nor being touched.

if a shaman is disturbed during his preparation, one **rp** is spent, and the ritual process has to be restarted over again.

the round after the preparation, the shaman can make a *ritual roll*: d20 to be compared to **lvl**+7. as for the action rolls, if you roll strictly under it, you succeed. otherwise, you fail. a natural 1 is a critical success, a natural 20 is a critical failure.

on a *success*, one **rp** is spent and the ritual works as described.

on a *failure*, one **rp** is spent, and the ritual has to be prepared and successfully rolled again to be effective.

on a *critical failure*, on top of the consequence indicated in the ritual description:

- the shaman loses **all** his **current rp,** and has to rest at least a full hour to prepare any ritual again,
- the shaman has to make a *save roll*. in case of failure, bad things happen: extra damages, hallucinations, black out,… obviously, this would give a disadvantage until this condition is removed.

on a *critical success*:

- the ritual works as described without any **rp** spent,
- the shaman will roll with advantage on his next *ritual roll*

healing

the shaman designates an ally and tries to cure their wounds. the shaman should touch them.

- *critical success*: the **hp** are reaching their maximum score.
- *success*: the shaman heals d4 **hp,** up to the maximum initial **hp** score of the character.
- *failure*: the ritual has failed and nothing happens.
- *critical failure*: the target character dies.

blessing

the shaman designates an ally and tries to give them luck. the shaman should see the target.

- *critical success*: the ally will roll with advantage for the next d4 rolls,
- *success*: the ally will make their next roll with an advantage.
- *failure*: no luck, the ritual has no effect.
- *critical failure*: the ally will make their next roll with a disadvantage.

rile up

the shaman designates an ally and their horde. the targets should be able to hear the shaman.

- *critical success*: the targets will double damage for the next round,
- *success*: the target makes +1 for each damage roll for the next round,
- *failure*: no extra damage, the ritual has no effect.
- *critical failure*: the targets will roll with disadvantage for the next round, and the horde chief has to make an *authority roll* to check their morale.

shield

the shaman designates a target *or himself* to give them protection. the shaman should touch the target.

- *critical success*: the target is granted +4 **ap** that will vanish after the end of the combat,
- *success*: the target is granted +1 **ap**,
- *failure*: no extra **ap**, the ritual has no effect.
- *critical failure*: the target protection, if any, is ineffective until the end of the fight. if the target was already with 0 **ap** left, the failed ritual inflicts d4 damages.

sleep

the shaman designates a single target to put them to sleep. the target should be at sight.

as it is an offensive ritual, the shaman will roll a (d20 + target level) and compare it to **lvl**+7.

- *critical success*: the target will sleep for d6 hours,
- *success*: the target will sleep for d6 minutes,
- *failure*: no sleep, the ritual has no effect.
- *critical failure*: the shaman is diving into sleep for d6 minutes.

levelling up

shamans that go on adventure level up like their fellow goblins. as expected, their **rp** score goes up by 1 for each **lvl**.

at **lvl** 2 and **lvl** 3, they can learn a new ritual from the list.

gm guide

where do goblins start?

you'll need to discuss with the players about the "goblin gang".

are they living in a free colony, hidden in deep tunnels? are they serving the **evil master** of a dungeon, in exchange of food and shelter? are they living in a civilization where they're (almost) tolerated? are they raiding goblins, somehow free to wander in the wastelands and loot villages or isolated farms?

do they have a chief? if they do, who is it? what do they have in common? do they belong to the same clan?

do they have a shaman? is he far away? is he in safety?

what's their current situation? are they chased by other creatures or are they at peace?

if you want to keep it a bit more random, you can spice this up with the following tables and rules:

origin

d10	origin
1-2	free colony
3-5	at the service of a dungeon master
7-8	raiding horde
9-10	urban goblins

who's the boss?

to randomly designate the horde chief, every character would make an *action roll* (**current hp+**7). if no **pc** succeeds, the chief is a **npc**. if only one **pc** succeeds, this character is the chief. if more than one have succeeded, the lowest roll wins the contest. you may eventually reroll if needed.

you may note that during the game, if the chief wants to give an order to the other goblins **pc**, he may have to make an authority roll. on a failure, the players can chose to rely on the *rebellion table* described in the "horde" section, or decide on their own how they're going to react.

where's the shaman?

roll 3 times a d8 to create/generate the shaman of the group.

d8	location	level	flaw
1	down a free colony tunnels	0	1/4 chances to refuse a ritual
2	a house in the mountains	0	can't perform a ritual by night
3	a house in the forest	1	bad memory, disadvantage when preparing the ritual
4	in the depth of a dungeon	1	wants to retire, will have to be convinced to perform a ritual
5	on an island in the middle of a lake	1	drinks way too much ; inhebrieted half of the time (disadvantage for rituals)
6	acts as a tavern keeper, under disguise	2	paranoia: will consider any request as a threat
7	travels through the land, hard to find	2	deaf: good luck explaining what you want
8	in custody	3	blind: can't perform rituals that require sight

if needed, level the shaman up accordingly by giving them additional rituals. of course, their **hp** and **rp** will also get increased.

remember that the shaman always knows the *healing ritual*.

monsters & heroes

most of the time, goblins will fight invaders, adventurers, dungeon looters and such. it may happen that they will be attacked by enemy tribes, orcs or trolls, or bigger monsters (fear the dragons!).

quick & simple

the simplest is the best: you can use the "monsters table" from **the black hack,** slightly modified ; the **lvl** of the opponent would roughly be equivalent to their **hd**. you'll roll that many d8 to determine their **hp**. you can also use any **osr**-compatible bestiary that indicates the creature **hd,** and you're set.

enemy hd/lvl	damage
1	d4 (2)
2	d6 (3)
3	2d4 (4)
5	d12 (6)
4	d10 (5)
6	d6 + d8 (7)
7	2d8 (8)
8	3d6 (9)
9	2d10 (10)
10	d10 + d12 (11)

monsters have 1 **ap** per **hd,** minus 1, to a maximum of 10.
heroes would receive some **ap** to the discretion of the **gm,** according to their class and gear.

monster example

> *the goblins are setting up an ambush. a lonely fellow is approaching.*
> *this is a bugbear, **hd** 3. the **gm** rolls 3d8 which gives it 16 **hp**.*
> *it has 2 **ap** (**hd** - 1) and will deal 2d4 damages on a successful hit.*
> *there's nothing special about this monster. maybe the **gm** would give it a large weapon... a big club, for example?*

hero example

> *the goblins are setting up an ambush. a lonely fellow is approaching.*
> *she's a **lvl** 3 elvish fighter. the **gm** rolls 3d8 that give her 13 **hp**.*
> *by default, she would make 2d4 damage per successful hit. this fighter is carrying a bow and a long knife. the **gm** decides that the long knife would make a d6 damage instead - she would preferrably use her bow.*
> *she's wearing a light leather armor, that'll give her 4 **ap**.*
> *will the goblins successfully ambush and kill her?*

osr, b/x, retroclone and compatible.

pick your favorite bestiary, or any old-school compatible stat-block in an adventure module. as long as they have **hd, hp, ac** and damage dice, you can throw them at your goblins.

heroes

there are many rulesets out there that are compatible with the oldest **rpg,** and most of them allow fast character generation. your **gm** would easily pick their favorite character generation rules, roll a few dice, and make a character up in a snap. the only issue is to level them up, but that shouldn't be *that* difficult.

you may use **the black hack** chargen like this:

the **gm** may grant these **npc** some magic items, special abilities, special powers, etc. it might be a bit longer for magic-users and such, but it may improve the gaming experience, since the enemies will probably look more diverse and more challenging to overcome or evade.

read the ancient scrolls

alternatively, any character compatible with the oldest **rpg** is alledgedly compatible this **the gobz hack**. why not searching for your old character sheets? you may gather old characters from past sessions and throw them against the goblin group. these **pc** will make perfect **npc** in this context.

Colophon

"The Black Hack", by David Black, is the main source of inspiration. It uses:

- Hit Dice as a basic stat for Monsters,
- Usage Dice,
- The Advantage / Disadvantage mechanics (although it was not invented in The Black Hack),
- Levelling up is decided by the Game Master and not based on XP count,
- The initiative mechanism,
- The Monster table.

"Hunters of the Unknown", by John Grümph, uses the level of the character to define the "mastery level" ; I've used it for save rolls because it's a Darwinian way to explain how the luckiest goblins could survive.

"Goblin Quest", by Grant Howitt, is also an excellent RPG about playing goblins (but in a rather silly and surrealistic way).

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