Encounter Building Decks: Directions

Role-Playing Game supplemental card decks for solo-play, GM assistance, decision making, location building, combat encounters, traps, and more.

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Encounter Building Decks

The Encounter Building Decks are meant to replace (or at least help) the Game Master in any role-playing game by providing locations, traps, combatants, and decision making in any adventure you can imagine. The system-less design of these decks allow them to be used with your RPG of choice and let the cards be idea generators rather than specific rules of play. The decks came about from my desire to play an RPG solo while still having a sense of discovery and unknown. I got tired of "exploring" maps that I had set-up ahead of time because I always knew what was in the next room! While these cards won't replace all the planning completely, the GM (or players who want to play without a GM) only need come up with the general story of the session, have level-appropriate stat blocks in mind, and bring the player characters. These cards will do the rest! This means the GM can play as a PC, the group can play without a GM after agreeing upon the general storyline, or you could solo-play your favorite RPG.

There are currently four specific decks you can use with 60 cards each. They are:

1. **Decisions**– These cards act as the stand-in GM by giving answers to yes/no questions, random die rolls, random events, details about an event, and even a simple quest generator. This deck is the barebones necessity if you want to try playing without a GM.

2. **Locations** – These cards describe a location within four different types of environment. They also give information about the number of exits (doors) within each room location, whether those doors are locked or not, and if there are secret doors to find. While this doesn't give you an exact map of each location, it does give you enough description and randomness to truly explore a dungeon or castle never knowing what the next room will bring.

3. **Traps** – These cards contain 120 possibilities for traps such pitfalls, crushing walls, magical auras to defeat, and more.

4. **Combat** – Come to a room filled with bad guy? Who are they? How do they fight? These cards detail combat encounters you may have. They give you the general type of enemy, how they attack, what their intentions are, difficulty level, special equipment or tactics, and more.

You should feel free to use as many or as few of the decks as you would like. If you're solo playing an RPG, you might want all four decks. If you're a dedicated GM with a group of players, you may find the Locations, Combats, and Traps most useful for generating ideas or to use directly during gameplay. Less prep and giving more control over to the cards allows you to create a PC to play in your own campaign.

On the following pages, you'll find the in-depth rules for using each of the four decks.

Decisions

The Decisions deck is meant to help play an RPG without a dedicated GM. This could be used either with a party of players, during solo play, or with a dedicated GM who wants to play along with the others as a PC. Using the Decisions deck is truly an amalgam of a story-telling game and normal pencil/paper RPGs. Let's look at the components of a Decision card to learn more.

A. Odds of Yes		B. Dice Rolls

ODDS OF YES

No Way	No
Unlikely	Yes
50/50	No but
Likely	No
For Sure	No and

DICE ROLLS

D4	3
D6	1
D10	5
D12	7
D20	15

C. Randomness		D. Details

RANDOMNESS

Difficulty	Moderate
Direction	W
Loot/Loss	Financial
Event?	No
Event Type	Setting

DETAILS (Adj, Noun)

Hateful	Happiness
Thrilling	Thoughtfulness
Wasteful	Heart
Closed	Openness
Tired	Oversight

E. Quest Ideas	

QUEST SEEDS

An item you have is cursed. Can you lift the curse, or will the item have to be destroyed?

A. Odds of Yes

This is the main mechanic used to replace a GM. You can ask yes/no questions to figure what exactly is happening. Want to know if the door is trapped? Wonder if the king really trusts you? Concerned whether or not the cultists captured the barmaid? Simply ask the question, think of the odds of the answer being yes, and flip a card. Look at the answer next to the odds you were thinking about.

The five categories of likelihood are:

1. **No Way** – This category doesn't actually mean that the answer to your question can't be yes. It just means that it's highly unlikely. The actual percent is a 10% chance of a yes.

2. **Unlikely** – This category is only a 25% chance of a yes.

3. **50/50** – This is even odds. Flip a coin.

4. **Likely** – Here you have a 75% chance of a yes.

5. **For Sure** – Again, this category doesn't mean it's a guaranteed yes, but there is a 90% of a yes.

Each time you need to progress your storyline, ask a yes/no question and pick the appropriate category of likelihood to see what's going on. While this doesn't function as explicitly as a GM in cases like having a conversation with an NPC, it does allow you to get the quick gist of the what the NPC is thinking and then truly *role-play* that idea out with the players.

To find out what that general idea of the storyline is, there are actually six possible answers to the yes/no question within each category of likelihood. They are:

1. **No and** – This answer not only means no, but the answer actually goes further in the direction of no. For example, you may ask a question such as, "Does the king agree to our plan to save the queen?" The answer of **No** might mean he rejects your proposal, but the answer of **No and** might mean not only is your proposal rejected, but the king is incensed that you would suggest it and kicks you out of the castle. He thinks you would recklessly endanger the queen and no longer trusts you. That's a lot of detail you can pull out of two small words! Just use whatever idea first comes to mind.

2. **No** – This is your straight up **No**. You can handle this.

3. **No but** – This is **No** with a glimmer of hope for **Yes**. Take the above example. In this case, a **No but** answer might mean your proposal is rejected, but there are some components of the plan he likes. The king instead suggests some modifications to the plan. He won't approve a full frontal assault to get the queen back, but he is willing to send in a team of experts to get the job done with minimal causalities.

4. **Yes but** – This is **Yes** with a little bit of **No** thrown in for good measure. With this answer your plan for a full frontal assault is approved, but the king insists you take along a member of his personal guard to represent his interests in the matter and ensure the queen's safety. He expects a meeting between the evil arch duke and his personal guardsman before the assault may commence.

5. **Yes** – Straight up **Yes**. Plan approved. Go do it.

6. **Yes and** – This is **Yes** with a little extra umph in the **Yes** direction. Your plan is not only approved, but the king is so excited that he will furnish you with some extra goodies to help the plan go off without a hitch. The king even plans to lead the charge himself against the arch-duke's fortress.

Here's another example. Suppose you are exploring an abandoned castle that you know has an evil vampire living inside. You get to the castle and move into the entryway. First, you want to know if the room is lit. Quickly thinking about it, you decide it is **Unlikely** that the room is lit. It's only the entryway after all; plus it's an abandoned castle. You draw the previously shown card and look at the **Unlikely** section under the **ODDS OF YES** and see that, **Yes**, indeed the room is lit. Unusual. Now play that out. Why would the room be lit? Maybe a sickly green light permeates the area. Where is the light coming from and who lit it?

You next ask the question, "Are there vampires in this room?" thinking that is the most logical source of a sickly green light. You think the odds are **For Sure** because the green light is definitely not a good sign. You draw another card. (For the sake of this exercise, let's use the previously shown card again.) Looking at the **For Sure** section you see the answer $\mathrm{No\ and}$. This means no, there are no vampires in the room. The "and" portion of the answer means that there is something in the answer to your question even further in the direction of "no." Thinking of the first thing that comes to mind, it seems that not only are vampires not here, but someone else is in this room who is most assuredly not a vampire. He's actually a vampire hunter and the green light is an artifact that he uses to locate undead. You've just found a new NPC using the Decision cards!

Special Note: It is easy to cheat the system by asking cheater questions such as, "Do I cheat and find a cheater's vorpal sword lying on the road because I'm a cheater?" Even with a **No Way** likelihood, you'll eventually get a Yes. The best advice I have ever been given came from my dad who sat me down one day and after a hesitant look at the ceiling, sighed and said, "Eric, don't be stupid." I share that advice with you now.

B. Dice Rolls

This is a way to generate random die rolls if you forgot your dice or prefer not to have dice jumping all over the table. The only dice represented on the cards are those that can be split nicely between 60 cards. So the D8 is not present. If you need a D8, just look at a D4 roll. If it's a 1 or 2, then the roll of the D8 is in the first half. If a 3 or 4, the roll of the D8 is in the second half. Then flip another card to see what the actual number is. So if you get a 3 followed by 2, that would be the second half (5 through 8) and the second number which is 6. You can play the same game for a D2 or D3 if you need to.

You can also use the die rolls to determine storyline progression. For example, you think there are four likely responses from a particular NPC, each just as likely as the other. Rather than ask yes/no questions to narrow it down, just assign each possibility a number on a D4 and then flip a card to see what happens.

C. Randomness

There are five types of randomness on the Decision cards that you can use to help flesh out more parts of a story. They are:

1. **Difficulty** – This is one of five possibilities which include Trivial (10% chance), Easy (20%), Moderate (30%), Hard (30%), or Impossible (10%). Trivial would mean very easy while Impossible means very hard, not truly impossible. If I would've used Hard and Difficult, which would have been harder? So I settled on Impossible.

    How hard will it be to convince the king to go along with our plan? How hard will it be to catch up with the bad guys? (I.e. How far of a head start did the bad guys get?) You can get a sense of how difficult something in the story will be rather than just using this to see how difficult enemies will be or how tough a trap is.

2. **Direction** – This is a random direction from the set of N, NE, E, SE, S, SW, W, or NW. Since those eight options don't split nicely over 60 cards, there is an extra set of the cardinal directions (N, E, S, and W) making them slightly more likely in this card deck.

   The firebomb missed and will hit a random adjacent target. Which way was it deflected? Which direction is the assault on our castle coming from?

3. **Loot/Loss** – If you come to a place where the characters are ready to receive some loot or maybe they lost a battle and need to lose something of value, you can use these ideas to help think of something other than just gold or magic items. There are ten possibilities which include:

   a. **Physical** – Loot could be an increase in strength or agility or an ability associated with those traits. Loss could be getting a significant scar, gaining a permanent limp, losing a finger, or something similar.

   b. **Mental** – Loot could be an increase in intelligence or wisdom or an ability associated with those traits like being able to solve puzzles more quickly. Loss could be taking a negative on checks about knowledge or temporarily forgetting how to speak a language.

   c. **Emotional** – Loot could be making a new friend, rekindling an old romance, or being reunited with a lost loved one. Loss could be having your significant other captured by the bad guy, having a friend turn against you, or losing a family member.

   d. **Spiritual** – Loot could be increasing your faith (or getting a spark of it if your character isn't part of the faithful), getting a more direct line of communication with your associated deity, or recovering an artifact of the faith. Loss could be a temporary challenge to casting divine magic, finding dirt on someone you looked up to as a devout follower, or losing an artifact of the faith.

   e. **Financial** – Um…gold?

   f. **Ability** – Loot would be gaining a special ability (supernatural or otherwise) such as being able to identify items quickly, cast a special spell once a day, or run straight up a flat surface for 20 ft. Loss would be losing one of these abilities.

   g. **Authority** – Loot could be gaining an NPC follower, responsibility and governance of a base of operations, or gaining a rank in the local military. Loss could be not being trusted with as high level missions from the king, being demoted, or being put in jail.

   h. **Material** – Loot could be expensive silks for trading, special dragon scales for making armor, rare magical components, or magic items. Loss would be losing these things.

   i. **Influence** – Loot would be gaining the trust of an important person, becoming an advisor to the king, or being heralded as a hero throughout the land. Loss would be losing these things.

   j. **Opportunity** – Loot would be gaining special opportunities you would not have had otherwise while Loss would be losing an opportunity you currently have.

Many of the options for loot or loss can also serve as a general mood for an event. For example, let's say you need to talk to the king's personal guardsman who is accompanying you on your journey to save the queen. You want to know if he has a personal stake in the quest or not. Drawing a card and looking at the loot/loss section, you get Emotional. Maybe this means that the guardsman has had a crush on the queen but never told her. He is emotionally invested in this quest making the "loot" for him being saving his forbidden love.

4. **Event?** – This tells you whether a random event occurs or not which are set at a 20% chance of occurring. Whenever you like, you can flip a card to see if a random event occurs. If you get a random event, flip another card to see what type of event it is. (Don't just use the type listed on the card with the **Yes** for the **Event?** section because the Yes is only on 20% of the cards.)

5. **Event Type** – If you get a random event, this category tells you what type of event it is. There are sixteen types of random events which are:

   a. **NPC Pos** – Something positive happens to an NPC with you. If you don't have an NPC with you, think about the first NPC that comes to mind. What would be positive and within the realm of the possibilities for that NPC? Use the first idea that makes sense.

   b. **NPC Neg** – Something negative happens to an NPC.

   c. **New NPC** – A new NPC is introduced in the game. Who is it? Who would be in this place right now with you? If you're in the middle of a dungeon crawl, maybe it's a minion who has decided to turn good. If you're lost in the forest, maybe it's a strange hermit.

   d. **1 PC Pos** – Something positive happens to one of the PCs (player characters). Think of this as a character building moment. What is something in a character's personal story that could use some positive progress? How does that play out at this moment? Try not to use this as simply giving out loot, although there is nothing to disallow that.

   e. **1 PC Neg** – Something negative happens to one of the PCs (player characters).

   f. **All PC Pos** – Something positive happens to all of the PCs (player characters). The party receives contact from a spiritual guide, or maybe they find a place they can safely rest in the midst of a chaotic dungeon.

   g. **All PC Neg** – Something negative happens to all of the PCs (player characters).

   h. **Help Short** – Progress is made towards a short term goal. For example, the big goal is stopping a dragon lich, but the short term goal is to defeat the lich's servant which is the vampire in the abandoned castle. Getting this random event might mean you come a hidden journal that tells of how this particular vampire became an undead. You can probably use this information to help stop or frustrate the vampire once you meet him face-to-face. This event is three times more likely than other random events.

   i. **Hurt Short** – A hindrance is presented or regression happens in terms of a short term goal. This event is three times more likely than other random events.

j. **Help Long** – Progress is made towards a long term goal. Maybe you discover another short term goal that will help build towards accomplishing the long term goal. Maybe you gain a sword of dragon slaying that will benefit you in the final confrontation with the dragon lich. Maybe you find the location of the dragon lich's phylactery.

k. **Hurt Long** – A hindrance is presented or regression happens in terms of a long term goal.

l. **News** – You receive news from someplace far off. You may not see how it fits into the overall plot just yet, but it can be a thread to tie in later. For example, you hear that a volcano erupts in the lands to the north. Later you discover that when the volcano erupted, part of the dragon lich was awakened.

m. **NPC Note** – You have a meaningful correspondence (in person or via letters or magic) with an NPC. Maybe you learn something significant about that NPC's past, or they tell you that they found some important information.

n. **Villain Note** – You have a meaningful correspondence (in person or via letters or magic) with one of the bad guys. Maybe it's the famous villain monologue, a letter from the big bad guy giving instructions to a mini-boss, or just a friendly note from the bad guy saying he's captured your mom.

o. **Setting** – This means there are some extra details about the environment that you should take note of. Maybe it means that the area just became more dangerous as a portion of the ceiling begins crumbling in the abandoned castle, or maybe there's a waterfall just outside the arch-duke's fortress which might mean an underwater entrance into the area to save the queen.

p. **Attack** – The party is attacked by something. You can flip a Combat card to see what you're attacked by or think of what would make sense in the circumstances.

These random event types can also help progress the storyline if you get stuck. You have put the evil arch-duke's fortress under siege, but nothing is really working. Based on the massive battle rules of your particular RPG system, everything is at a standstill. They have food to last for months, and they can repel most attacks with their thick walls. Time to flip a card to move the story along by looking at the Event Type.

D. Details

Anytime you need more details to flesh out a situation, whether it's for a yes/no question, for a random event, or you just need some more direction, you can use the Details section. Here you'll find a list of five random adjectives and five random nouns. Look for a combination of an adjective and a noun that would give you a good idea of how to add more details in this situation.

For example, remember meeting the vampire hunter back in the abandoned castle with the green light? Let's see if there are some more details we can find out about him. On the card (if you look all the way back) were the following adjectives and nouns:

Hateful	Happiness
Thrilling	Thoughtfulness
Wasteful	Heart
Closed	Openness
Tired	Oversight

One combination that stands out to me is Hateful Heart. Maybe this vampire hunter is not actually out to save the goodly folk of the world but rather to get revenge for a vampire attack on his village. Hate fills his heart and makes him a reckless ally moving through the rest of the castle. He'd rather go in guns blazing full of loud bravado than try to sneak up on the big vampire.

Alternately, you can flip a card and look at the D10 numbers to get a random number between one and five. Just take the result divided by 2 and use that adjective. For example, I flip a 7 (divided by 2, round up to 4) so the 4th adjective. Then I flip a 9 (divided by 2, round up to 5) so the 5th noun. That gives me Closed Oversight. Maybe the vampire hunter is very silent except that he immediately begins giving orders to the PCs on how to finish off these vampires. He doesn't respond to suggestions and meticulously makes sure the PCs follow his order even though they don't know him at all.
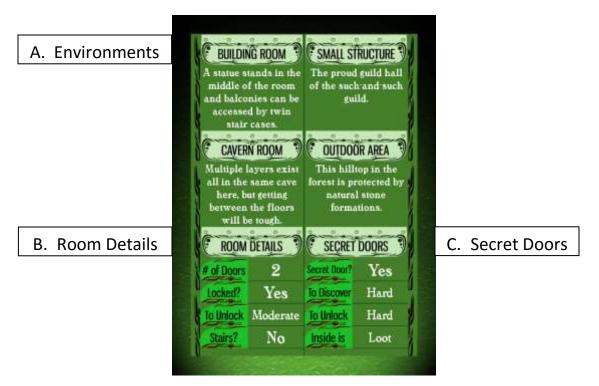
You could even use an adjective from one card and a noun from the next card.

E. Quest Seeds

This is a way to generate random quest ideas. They are nothing specific, but rather just the beginnings of ideas that could be used for random side quests not too significant to the story line, a starting place for building a more specific quest inside the overall story, or even just "filling the hexes" in a more sandbox style game play.

Locations

The Locations deck helps players and/or GMs to explore an area more organically by generating random rooms or places. This prevents having to create the perfect map before playing. This deck will give you a brief description of a location which you can then quick sketch on the fly. Let's look at an example card to see how this works.

A. Environments

B. Room Details

C. Secret Doors

BUILDING ROOM
A statue stands in the middle of the room and balconies can be accessed by twin stair cases.

SMALL STRUCTURE
The proud guild hall of the such and such guild.

CAVERN ROOM
Multiple layers exist all in the same cave here, but getting between the floors will be tough.

OUTDOOR AREA
This hilltop in the forest is protected by natural stone formations.

ROOM DETAILS		SECRET DOORS	
# of Doors	2	Secret Door?	Yes
Locked?	Yes	To Discover	Hard
To Unlock	Moderate	To Unlock	Hard
Stairs?	No	Inside is	Loot

A. Environments

There are four environments on every card and a location for each environment. Each location is meant to describe a place where some significant action might take place. Whenever you want to go to a new room or location, flip another card. Keep in mind that you won't build a dungeon in exact detail as there are not that many hallway cards.

For example, let's say you are exploring that vampire castle still. After the entryway, you start flipping cards to go from room to room. You might flip some locations in this order: guard room, throne room, grand staircase room, narrow hallway. There could have been hallways between the guard room and throne room, but nothing significant happened there if so. The narrow hallway card that was flipped last means that something significant happened in that particular hallway while the others weren't worth mentioning.

The four different environments which give specific locations on each Location card are:

1. **BUILDING ROOM** – This section provides rooms that you might find in a large structure such as castle or sprawling dungeon complex.

2. **CAVERN ROOM** – This section provides rooms or caverns within a huge underground cavern complex.

3. **SMALL STRUCTURE** – This section allows you to generate random buildings in anything from a great city to a tiny village. No more do you have to plop down the whole map of the city at once. Just flip the cards to see what building you come to next.

4. **OUTDOOR AREA** – This section gives you outdoor zones where action might take place.

Just because there are four types of environments doesn't mean you can't mix them as needed. For example, you could use the Outdoor Area locations even when underground to discover a long forgotten dinosaur utopia. And don't forget to flavor the cards as needed. Just because the description is of a river outside in a forest doesn't mean you can't actually have the river be in a jungle or mountain range. Flavor it to your environment for your specific game world.

There are a few generic rooms in the deck as well (like a large square room). One thing you could do to build a more detailed map is to put unique rooms in a discard pile after use and shuffle more generic cards (like hallways or basic shaped rooms with little description) back into the deck before flipping one again. This will give you more of the feel of a classic dungeon crawl.

B. Room Details

This gives you more information about the specific room you are in. I might suggest flipping the first card to find the room and then flipping a second card for room details. You get four additional details from this part of the card:

1. **# of Doors** – This tells you the number of additional doors in the room. That means it doesn't include the door you came in. You can get between zero and three additional doors or exits within a room with a 25% chance of each.

2. **Locked?** – This tells you whether the additional doors are locked or not. You can also draw a new card for each door within the room if you want. Doors are locked 50% of the time.

3. **To Unlock** – This tells you how hard it is to unlock the door with the five basic options of Trivial (10%), Easy (30%), Moderate (30%), Hard (20%), or Impossible (10%). As described earlier, Impossible just means very hard, not truly impossible.

4. **Stairs?** – This tells you if there is a staircase in the room or not. I would suggest choosing whether the stairs go up, down, or both based on your specific game setting, but you can also choose between those three options randomly using a D6 roll on a Decisions deck card. Stairs occur approximately 17% (actually $\frac{1}{6}$) of the time.

C. Secret Doors

This section tells you if there is a secret door in the location. You get four additional details from this part of the card:

1. **Secret Door** – This tells you whether or not there is a secret door.

2. **To Discover** – This tells you how hard it is to find the secret door with four basic options of Easy (~17%), Moderate (~33%), Hard (~33%), or Impossible (~17%).

3. **To Unlock** – This tells you how hard it is to unlock the secret door with the five basic options of Trivial (~8%), Easy (25%), Moderate (25%), Hard (~33%), or Impossible (~8%). All secret doors are locked.

4. **Inside Is** – This tells you what is inside the secret room. The eight possible options are:

   a. **Room** (~17%) – Another random room, so flip another card. This can open up more exploration options.

   b. **Stairs** (~8%) – A set of stairs going…someplace.

   c. **Saferoom** (~8%) – A room designed to keep the occupant safe at any cost. What is actually in the room will depend on the environment you are exploring. A fancy castle's saferoom could be very different from a saferoom in a hollowed out hill. Most have provisions, chamber pot, candles, parchment, etc., but the castle saferoom may have potent means of protection such as weapons and traps to put on the secret door.

   d. **Random Event** (~17%) – Means to flip a Decisions deck card to find a random event type.

   e. **Loot** (~17%) – You found some loot! Something might make sense in your storyline to find behind this secret door. (Maybe it was a secret safe that holds a valuable magic ring.) If nothing comes readily to mind, use the Decisions deck to see what type of loot it is.

   f. **Trap** (~8%) – Flip a Trap card from the Traps deck to find out what type of trap you have stumbled across.

   g. **Info** (~17%) – You have unlocked a secret compartment containing sensitive information that will probably help you in your quest.

   h. **Short Cut** (~8%) – You find a tunnel that appears to be a short cut to another part of the castle, cave, or town. It may also be a short cut out of the dungeon. Pick something that makes sense in the situation.

Traps

Since some of the locations have traps, let's look at the Traps deck next which is a set of 120 traps. Here's one of the cards.

A. Trap Description

B. Tests and Traits

You'll note that each card has two traps. When you draw a card, choose the trap that makes more sense in the situation and turn the card so that trap faces you. There are two main parts to each trap.

A. Trap Description

This tells you what type of trap it is and gives you a detailed description of how the trap works. Again, everything is system-neutral (or attempting to be), so modify as you see fit. The description may talk about tests to be passed to avoid taking additional damage or to avoid the effects. These tests (such as a fortitude test in the example above) may not be something within your system. Substitute something similar that does exist in your RPG ruleset. I tried to use neutral language (such as willpower instead of will save), but that didn't always work well. Since these cards are only game aids and not hard and fast rules, use the spirit of the cards, not the letter of the cards. In other words, don't try to rules lawyer these things as it won't turn out well.
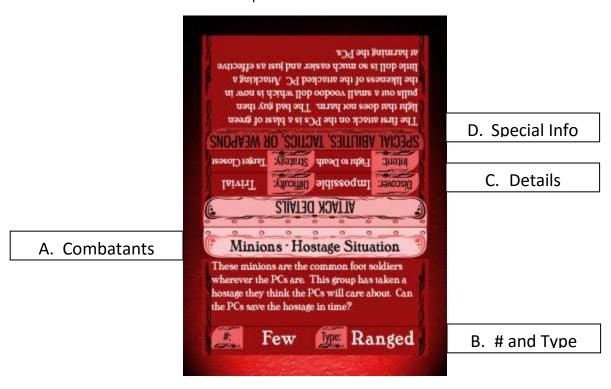
B. Tests and Traits

These are the meat and potatoes of the trap. There are four symbols here that each represent an important test or trait of the trap. They are:
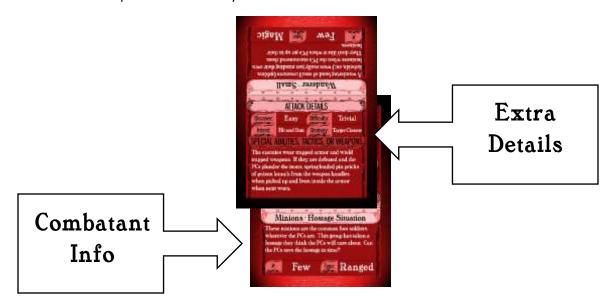
1. **Eye** – This tells you how hard the trap is to discover. I tried to make it so that this is more like how hard it is to discover the trap mechanism which would be used to disarm the trap rather than just seeing the trap in the first place. There are the standard options of Trivial, Easy, Mod (moderate), Hard, and Imp (impossible).

2. **Gear and Wrench** – This tells you how hard it is to disarm the trap. Keep in mind that many of the traps may be magical in nature meaning that the difficulty is dependent on the character being able to disarm magical traps in the first place. The same five options exist.

3. **Running Man** – This tells you how hard it is to avoid the trap. If you were able to discover the trap before it triggers, you might attempt to avoid the trap. For example, maybe it's a pitfall hidden in the center of the room. If you actually spot the false floor, it's trivial to avoid the trap by simply not stepping on the fake floor.

4. **Voodoo Doll** – This tells you how much damage the trap deals to players. The options are None, Low, Mod (moderate), High, and N/A. None means the trap itself deals no damage while N/A means the trap does deal damage but it is dependent on other things. For example, a trap that drowns players does deal damage, but it is based on how your system handles drowning. A trap that creates copies of the PCs to fight does deal damage, but it depends on how tough the PCs are since they are fighting their own mirror images.

Combat

When you need a combat encounter, you can flip a card from the Combat deck to see who those combatants will be. Let's look at an example card to see how this works.

A. Combatants

B. # and Type

C. Details

D. Special Info

ATTACK DETAILS

Minions · Hostage Situation

These minions are the common foot soldiers wherever the PCs are. This group has taken a hostage they think the PCs will care about. Can the PCs save the hostage in time?

#. Few   Type: Ranged

Discover: Impossible Difficulty: Trivial
Intent: Fight to Death Strategy: Target Closest

SPECIAL ABILITIES, TACTICS, OR WEAPONS

The first attack on the PCs is a blast of green light that does not harm. The bad guy then pulls out a small voodoo doll which is now in the likeness of the attacked PC. Attacking a little doll is so much easier and just as effective at harming the PCs.

You'll note that each card has two sides that are meant to function independently. The first side tells you about the combatants themselves while the flip side gives more details that can used by combatants. In general, I suggest drawing one card for the combatants and another for the details. You can then flip the details card and overlap them so that they look like this:

Combatant Info

Extra Details

A. Combatants

This section of the card describes the combatants which breaks down into two main categories: Minions or Wanderers. Minions are servants of the big bad guy. So if you were exploring the vampire castle, then most of the minions would be undead. If you were exploring an underground drow city, most of the minions would be drow.

Wanderers are truly random encounters. These could be magical beasts, fey, elementals, random large sized creatures, or anything else that is simply wandering around. It's still a combat, but it may not progress the storyline unless the PCs can figure out how this combat with wandering creatures relates. For example, in the vampire castle maybe the vampire has allowed other creatures to take up residence there. Even though they don't directly serve the vampire, they exist there because he allows it. So you could run into some goblins (Wanderers – Small Creatures) who are not exactly minions of the vampire. They just needed a place to live and decided if the vampire would refrain from eating them, maybe no heroes would come to slay them because of the vampire.

For either type of combatant, there is a slightly more detailed description just below the title of the combatants.

B. # and Type

There are three options for the number of combatants: Few, Many, or Solo. Since there are way more combinations of enemy, number, and type than can be put on just 60 cards, I tried to pick options that made the most sense for each combatant. You are of course welcome to draw a new card for the number and type to attempt to randomize it more, but the options are not balanced that way.

The Type refers to the combatants' main attack type which could be one of three options: Melee, Ranged, or Magic. These are not meant to be exclusive options, but rather just what the primary attack types of this particular group of bad guys is. So if it says Ranged, that doesn't mean they exclusively attack with bows. In all likelihood, each enemy has a melee weapon, but most would prefer to use a bow or sling if possible. Some of the group may even still be melee only guys to protect so many ranged attackers. The type listed here is just a suggested focal point for the bad guy attacks.

C. Details

There are four options for the additional details of combatants:

1. Discover – This is how hard the bad guys are to discover. If you get Trivial, you would spot them right away. No ambushes happening here. However, if you get Impossible, you're probably going to be ambushed because spotting them will be so difficult. The difficulties for spotting the enemies can be Trivial (~17%), Easy (~17%), Moderate (25%), Hard (25%), and Impossible (~17%).

2. Difficulty – This is how hard the enemies are in general. I thought about making categories for armor, damage, and hit points separately with low, moderate, or high for each, but the sheer number of combinations by introducing more variables would have made the cards impossible to make. So instead, I just made it a single variable of difficulty with the same options of Trivial, Easy,

Moderate, Hard, and Impossible each with a 20% chance. Whether the enemy is difficult because they have high HP or because they have strong attacks is up to you.

3. **Intent** – This gives you the purpose of the bad guys. Approximately 41% of the enemies will **Fight to Death,** meaning they desire the demise of the PCs and will see it through to the end. Another 41% will **Hit and Run**. They know their job is to stop the PCs, but if they start to lose or are clearly overpowered, they'll run away to attack again at a different time. They're not foolish enough to throw away their lives in a fight they know they'll lose. The final approximate 8% are there to **Gather Intel,** meaning they are trying to find out the PCs' motives and movements. They may talk to the PCs before engaging to try to draw out information. They might try to remain hidden and just spy on the PCs. Either way, once information is obtained, they try to make it back to their boss with the info as quickly as possible. They may have to incapacitate a hero or two before they can run, but run they will.

4. **Strategy** – This gives you the main attack strategy of the enemies which is a 50/50 chance between **Target Closest**, meaning that each enemy attacks the closest PC, or **Focus Fire**, meaning that the enemies find a single PC target and try to take that target down as quickly as possible. I wanted to put in another option of spreading out their attacks to try to damage all the PCs evenly, but again the combinations were a hindrance to the cards. Feel free to add in that option if you desire.

D. Special Info

This is a hodgepodge of either special tactics the enemies will use, special abilities they employ during battle, or special equipment they wield in battle. The special equipment can also double as cool loot for PCs to pick up after the battle.

Special Note: The BBEG (Big Bad Evil Guy) card is usually the big boss at the end of a story arc or session, so you may not want that card to be randomly in the Combat Deck because it could end up being the first card drawn. You can either leave the BBEG in the deck to find randomly, take it out entirely to never encounter at all, take it out and plan on it being the Xth encounter (like the 8th encounter, no matter what), or create a smaller Combat Deck for this specific location.

To make a smaller Combat Deck with the BBEG in, take the BBEG card and as many other cards as make sense from the deck to use that as your Combat Deck. For example, you can take the BBEG card, seven of the Minion cards, and two Wanderers to make a smaller deck of ten cards. Now take the BBEG and four of the ten cards. Shuffle both sets of five cards separately. Then put the five with the BBEG on bottom of the other five cards. You now have a ten card deck where the Big Bad Evil Guy will show up sometime randomly after five battles. You'll never know when he'll show up which makes it more fun to play solo while still giving you some fights leading up to the last big battle!

You can also make a smaller Combat Deck without the BBEG. Let's say you hate fighting spirits and undead. Just remove those cards from the deck before drawing for combat encounters.

The Suggestion Box

While it takes FOREVER to make these cards, I am definitely open to revisions that need to happen or cards you would like to see added in future decks. If there are enough ideas, I plan to put out either whole new decks (I've toyed with cards that have actual maps on them) or additional cards for the existing decks (more cool location descriptions to explore or enemies to fight).

If you have any suggestions, please feel free to contact me at ericbright2002 then the @ symbol followed by yahoo dot com. (Do you think that will confuse any bots scanning these pages? I hate spam.)

Enjoy!

Eric Bright