



Dungeons And Dragons Basic Set [Box Set]

John Eric Holmes , Gary Gygax , Dave Arneson

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Edited by Eric Holmes

This version of Basic Dungeons and Dragons (the cover reflects the 2nd printing of the "Holmes version" is the followup to the Original D&D sets.

Dungeons And Dragons Basic Set [Box Set] Details

Date : Published January 1st 1979 by TSR Hobbies (first published 1977)

ISBN : 9780394511115

Author : John Eric Holmes , Gary Gygax , Dave Arneson

Format : 48 pages

Genre : Fantasy, Games, Gaming, Sports and Games, Role Playing Games, Dungeons and Dragons



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From Reader Review Dungeons And Dragons Basic Set [Box Set] for online ebook

David says

This was my introduction to Dungeons & Dragons. While five stars might be high, I remember how I felt way back then. The rules were simple, maybe simplistic, but it opened up a whole new world. My imagination bloomed. It was truly an amazing experience. While later editions have greatly expanded upon and improved the rules, the doors of wonder were already opened for me. That's why I give this five stars.

Ben says

The one that started it all for me. This book is responsible for hours of fun and hundreds of pencils.

Max says

This book, while useful as an introduction to AD&D, is not as good as a standalone product, unlike the subsequent Moldvay and Mentzer versions. The rules are often vague (for example, the die rolled for damage is never made completely clear) and too little time is spent on characters in favor of relatively useless monster and treasure information. Some of the monsters are far too powerful for the first to third level characters that can be made with the set, such as vampires or chimeras. There are equally overpowered magic items, including the Ring of Three wishes. Also, the text often tells the reader to refer to the AD&D books to get complete rules. These issues mean that while this version of Basic Dungeons and Dragons is a serviceable introduction to its Advanced counterpart, it is wanting when it comes to using it by itself.

Jason says

My copy of Eric Holmes's 1979 edition of Dungeons & Dragons is the oldest book in my RPG collection. It was the first RPG I ever played. I was 7, possibly 8 years old, and my brother, 11 or 12, was the DM. Even though I played D&D with my brother over the next 10 years, I'm not sure I ever read the books before, and certainly never all the way through. We had the AD&D books before long, so the game we played was a mashup of rules, just like every other homebrewed game of D&D going on around the world.

Reading the book now was an enjoyable and interesting experience. I had always thought of the game as being about characters and adventures, but really it is a game about strategy and luck, or what I have been calling chance and choice. In a lot of ways, the game is like a board game, only the board gets revealed as the players play. Each encounter, or each dangerous room, reveals not what's in the characters' heads or hearts, but what is in the players' heads, and occasionally I suppose in their hearts. The choices you make are not about "what would my character do," but "what would I do to try to survive this." This is especially true at lower levels when characters are fragile and prone to dying. Questions of motivation and relationships are all moot early on. We are here to get gold and to get stronger and more efficient! Any roleplaying about interpersonal friction is flavor on top, not a prescribed part of the game. From personal experience, I know that the longer you play in a campaign, the more relevant things like character and relationships become, but

when you are in a dungeon proper, survival is always the foremost goal, and that's about you the player, not the character your playing.

The heart of the game is randomization and probability. The rules of the game are essentially a list of probabilities for any given situation. Chances that a door are closed and locked, chances that a wandering monster comes by, chances that you are poisoned, chance that you hit with your sword, chances that you notice a secret door—it's all a collection of probabilities. This is the backbone of the game's "fairness" to some extent. It's not the DM's decision whether a monster comes along, or if it does what kind of monster it is. That's the dice. It's not the DM's decision whether the noise you are making is going to bring danger on you. That's the dice. In fact, in Holmes's parting words, he says this: "You are sure to encounter situations not covered by these rules. Improvise. Agree on a probability that an event will occur and convert it to a die roll – roll the number and see what happens!" The very act of creating new rules is the act of determining probability.

But it's not just chance; it's choice too. The DM's choices come in part before the game is played. The DM chooses what the dungeon looks like, where the traps are, where the monsters are, and where the treasures are. (The restrictions are made clear in the game too, though. Only a third of the rooms should be populated. Choose monsters that give a challenge but aren't impossible. Create traps that are dangerous but capable of being overcome. Give enough treasure to reward their effort, but not so much that levelling up is simple.) Then, during play, the characters encounter the dungeon and your job is to play it out as it is by seeing what they do and having thing trigger as you set them. Of course, there are decisions the DM needs to make during play to, such as fictional positions that affects the odds as the rules present them, making this event more likely or that event less likely. The DM is kind of an arbiter of chance, but unless something is obviously impossible or un-fuckup-able, the dice will have the final word.

The players choices are about resource use. The stats may be random, but the player can sacrifice points from this stat to raise that stat. The money assigned may be random, but the player decides what items to get with her dearth or surplus of wealth. The hit points rolled may be random, but how fiercely I protect that number is up to the way I engage with the dangerous world of the dungeon. The tension of the game is between the greedy goals of the characters and their limited means in a world that places life and death pressures on them.

The capitalist bent of the game has been much discussed, but it's really a festival of Darwinism, isn't it? You are born from the random DNA of dice, but it's up to you to make something of yourself. If your random collection of genes is good, your choices wise, and luck on your side at key moments, then you might be bound for greatness. But any one of those things being off can spell your doom. Wise choices with shit stats is a greater uphill battle. Great stats with careless playing will likely result in a fine-looking corpse. But life is cruel, and sometimes great stats and wise choices can still fail in the face of a single bad dice roll. There's a fairness about it that is appealing to the American mind. Your character might be a fantasy version of an Horatio Alger's story, an epic rags-to-riches tale of pluck, determination, and good choices. But it also says that just because you're born with every advantage, it doesn't mean you will succeed. The world (i.e. the dice) may be indifferent, but there is fairness and equality in that indifference. The characters are incredibly mobile, socially and financially, and barring death, they will only ever go up. It's an American dream set in a fantasy world.

This is a beautiful edition of the game for its simplicity and completeness. Everything you need, including a sample dungeon, is in 48 pages. That includes an equipment list, a set of monsters, and a collection of spells. From there you can expand in anyway you like, making the laws of fate more exacting and specific, or further generalizing other possibilities. Holmes's writing is clear and there are very few parts of the rules that require greater clarification. I'm undoubtedly influenced by the nostalgia of my youth, but this is a great way to play D&D.

Jonathan Dearborn says

All in all a great introduction to Role Play for me in 3rd Grade, I still enjoy Keep on the Borderlands as a Introduction to a large low level open adventure and Keep.

Joseph says

Although the three-book set was released earlier, this was the first D&D set I ever got. It was \$10.00, which was a lot of money at the time, and only had rules for characters level 1-3. It also opened the door for playing out heroic action, and I had already read The Hobbit and the Lord of the Rings, which led shortly into Robert E. Howard and Michael Moorcock. The rating is nostalgic, rather than substantive, because the rules were crude and somewhat poorly organized. As I continued to play, I figured out that I had been doing it wrong for some time, but none of that diminished the pleasure that my friends and I got from engaging in collective fantasy.

Peter says

A fascinating early version of one of my favorite games. I had never read this one before, my first exposure to D&D was the BECMI version by Frank Mentzer. A lot of the details are different, mostly because the heritage of this version is OD&D while the later Mentzer stuff had all of AD&D to fall back on (and frequently ignore). But it's still recognizably D&D. Rather enjoyable read although I don't think I'd be tempted to run this as written.

Mike (the Paladin) says

I reviewed this under the basic rules book. Since I first managed to get the boxed set of what was to be called "Basic Dungeons and Dragons" and then later the hard cover books of what we then called Advanced Dungeons and Dragons (AD&D) I have enjoyed D&D and many other "RPGs" (Role Playing Games).

At the time D&D arrived on the scene fantasy readers were "fewer and farther between" and Fantasy Gamers were nonexistent. Later arcade games provided electronic fantasy for \$.25 a play. When D&D hit our chance to get into fantasy worlds could also involve novels, pulp magazines AND sitting around a table with pencils, paper and dice.

As Sheldon Cooper pointed out we used the most powerful engine for fantasy gaming, our minds, LOL.

NERDS OF THE WORLD UNITE!

This holds a lot of good memories...lots of hours burned fighting kobolds, orcs and slaying dragons. That's right all you young nerds, we were there when it all started. :)

Ken says

This is the original Dungeons & Dragons Basic set, and it is a lovely 3 level game in its own right. This edit of D&D with the author's own rule interpretations was written by a prominent fan - Dr. Holmes - and TSR agreed to publish it, thus essentially becoming the first 'clone'. There's all kinds of interesting nuggets in here: the unique dex-based initiative system, detect magic reveals what potions do, +1 swords only grant a to hit bonus, magic missiles need a to hit roll, it includes all kinds of powerful monsters well beyond what a 3rd level pc could handle, and has other monsters left out of subsequent basic D&D publications like brass dragons. The best part of the booklet are the Stone Mountain cross-section and the sample dungeon, which still has the best adventure background I've seen. The only reason this didn't get 5 stars is that there are 3 big issues with these rules: (1) strength doesn't help in carrying or combat like it should, leading to awkwardness with items such as the ring of weakness, gauntlets of ogre power, and with the encumbrance rules (2) elves are listed as accumulating xp in both their classes, but what happens when the fighter xp ticks over to 2001, do they get a new hit die then or not? (3) there's no reason to use any melee weapon other than a dagger. All 3 of these issues are easily corrected with house rules.

Michael says

This was the version of the rules that started my imagination going while I was still a child, and made D&D my obsession for many years to come. In many ways, this simpler version of the rules limited players to the standard "dungeon slog" that became deeply criticized as wider options became available. However, there was also a liberation to being able to play the game without the multiple volumes of complex charts and regulations. Just a single booklet, some dice and paper, and you were ready to travel to worlds of your own imagination! A powerful and enjoyable thing indeed.

Updated 8/2016: One thing that strikes me as I re-read this is that, if played in strict accordance with the rules, this is a surprisingly unbalanced game – balanced against the PCs. For example, the monsters' chance to hit improves with each increase in hit dice, while the players all stay at the same ability from first level to third, meaning that a third level fighter has a worse chance to hit his opponent than a 1+1 HD monster has to hit the fighter. Similarly, fighters are at no special advantage in combat over magic users, since all weapons inflict 1d6 damage, including the fighter's sword and the magic user's dagger. The fighter's only benefit is a better hit point average and the ability to wear armor, and a first level fighter still has a 15% chance of getting only one hit point. A cleric doesn't gain the ability to cast spells until they attain second level, so they are essentially slightly weak fighters (who can turn still weaker undead creatures) when starting out. In short, if played by the rules, this game will result in frequent character deaths, but I suspect that since most of its players were the age I was (8 or 9 when I first got it), few if any ever read the rules that closely, and we made our decisions based more on what was fun than what was written

Nick says

Like many of my generation of gamers I started out with a copy of the red-box set. Mine was second hand, found on a market stall and though the box is long gone, I still have and treasure the original books today.

It was a long road from there to here, but though I'd read a lot of "where it all began", it was not something I'd even experienced myself - so when I got a chance to read the original white-box 1974 rulebooks I leapt at the chance to see where everything started. What I found was completely different from what I had expected.

You hear a lot said about the early rules. They were hard to understand, no-one knew how the game was supposed to work, they don't stand up to modern-day standards. Well, as I had never before had any experience with the 1974 set, I am coming at the books completely untouched by nostalgia and with a history of many years of rpg's, wargames and boardgames to help understand.

That was probably the first thing I noticed about the game itself, It really wasn't as difficult to understand as I had been led to believe. I think perhaps it is simply that the mechanics we are used to today have their roots in these mechanics from the past, so it's simple for me to see what they are attempting to do, but on the whole the rules felt reasonably simple and to-the-point.

It is obvious from the start that these rules were written by, and presumably for, people with serious war games experience. Some parts were also a little difficult to understand as they expected the reader to be familiar with, and own a copy of, Chainmail and other similar games.

It seemed to me then, reading through the books, that D&D had grown out of their desire to add a larger framework to their fantasy war games. To have characters that grew and became more powerful over time, that had a story to tell. This really resonated with me as it is the same reason I always gravitated to Necromunda and Blood Bowl over WFB or 40k, that sense of drama and consistency.

The aim appeared different too. Whilst the dungeon-crawling is certainly there right from the start and a major part of the game, a lot more attention is paid to what -else- happens. Characters set themselves up as nobility, build castles and raise armies, all with surprisingly detailed and workable rulesets. There are rules for clearing monsters out of an area so your people can live happy, and for making war on other nearby castles and kingdoms.

You can certainly do all this in a modern D&D version, such as 3.5, but the rules aren't all included in the core book. Supplements such as the Stronghold Builders guidebook are required, and even then the focus is more on building a home base for an adventuring party rather than attempting to forge an entirely new nation in your own image.

As for the rules themselves, they are sparse and far more emphasis is placed on the dungeon master "winging" it. There was a lot less structure in these early rules, something the independent games of today are re-embracing wholeheartedly. Much of the idea for an adventure site seemed to be a dungeon that was constantly changing, expanding, and delving deeper; with the adventures making many delves into the one dungeon and finding earlier levels re-worked and reoccupied, just as challenging as the first time through. Nethack was far closer to the original source material than I ever suspected.

On the whole, reading the original books and understanding the magic of what they were trying to do, in a time when it have never been done before, makes you understand how D&D grabbed generations of gamers and their imaginations in a death grip and refused to let go.

I guess the most important thing I can say about reading through these rules is that despite my shelves of 3.5e material and many other new(er) games available, I still walked away with an urge to sit down and give the original box set a try. It is a very different beast from the D&D of today.