

Knave

KNAVE is a set of house rules for running old-school fantasy role-playing games. Some of its features include:

High compatibility with OSR games. If you have a library of OSR monster manuals, adventure modules and spell books, they will all work just fine in Knave.

Fast to teach, easy to run. If you are introducing a group of new players to OSR games, Knave allows them to make characters and understand all the rules in minutes.

No classes. Every PC is a Knave, a tomb-raiding, adventure-seeking ne'er-do-well who wields a spell book just as easily as a blade. This is an ideal system for players who like to switch up their character's focus from time to time and don't like being pigeonholed. A PC's role in the party is determined largely by the equipment they decide to pack.

Abilities are king. Traditional saving throws and attack bonuses are all rolled into the six abilities. Rather than having ability scores that range from 3 to 18, the abilities in Knave have **defense scores** that start around 11 and can be raised up to 20 over the PC's career, mirroring the numerical scale of traditional Armor Class. The higher an ability's defense, the harder it is for an enemy to overcome the PC in that arena. Abilities also have **bonus scores** ranging from +1 to +10 that are added to d20 rolls and correspond directly to that ability's defense (an ability with a defense of 14 has a bonus of +4).

Optional player-facing rolls. Knave easily accommodates referees who want the players to do all the rolling. Switching between the traditional shared-rolling model and player-only rolling can be done effortlessly on the fly.

Copper standard. Knave assumes that the common unit of currency is the copper penny. All item prices use this denomination and approximate actual medieval prices.

Character Creation

The Steps

1 Player Characters (PCs) have six abilities: Strength, Dexterity, Constitution, Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma. Each ability has two related values: a **bonus** and a **defense**. Roll 3d6 for each of your abilities, in order. The lowest of the three dice on each roll is that ability's bonus. Add 10 to this value to find its defense.

Example: You roll a 2, 2, and 6 for your Strength. The lowest die is a 2, so your Strength has a bonus of +2 and a defense of 12.

Bonus	+0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	+6	+7	+8	+9	+10
Defense	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20

2 You begin with 3d6 x 10 copper coins to spend on equipment. You have a number of item slots equal to your Strength defense, and items that you buy must fit into available slots. Most items take up 1 slot, but some take up more. Some small items can be bundled together into a single slot. Ask the referee if you are unsure.

Armor that you buy comes with an Armor defense value. Note that value down on your sheet with its corresponding Armor bonus (see the chart for abilities, above). If you are not wearing any armor, your Armor defense is 10 and your armor bonus is +0.

3 You begin with 1d8 maximum and current hit points. Your healing rate is 1d8+your Constitution bonus. Your exploration speed is 120ft per exploration turn, and your combat speed is 30ft per combat round.

4 Invent or roll the rest of your traits, such as your physique, face, skin, hair, clothing, virtue, vice, speech, background, and alignment. Note that alignment does not indicate your character's personality but instead their allegiance to cosmic forces. Choose a gender and a name for your character, but don't get too attached. It's a dangerous world out there.

Physique

- | | | | |
|--------------|-------------|----------------|--------------|
| 1. Athletic | 6. Hulking | 11. Short | 16. Stout |
| 2. Brawny | 7. Lanky | 12. Sinewy | 17. Tiny |
| 3. Corpulent | 8. Ripped | 13. Slender | 18. Towering |
| 4. Delicate | 9. Rugged | 14. Flabby | 19. Willowy |
| 5. Gaunt | 10. Scrawny | 15. Statuesque | 20. Wiry |

Face

- | | | | |
|-------------|--------------|-------------|-------------|
| 1. Bloated | 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 |

Skin

- | | | | |
|----------------|----------------|--------------|---------------|
| 1. Battle Scar | 6. Oily | 11. Reeking | 16. Sunburned |
| 2. Birthmark | 7. Pale | 12. Tattooed | 17. Tanned |
| 3. Burn Scar | 8. Perfect | 13. Rosy | 18. War Paint |
| 4. Dark | 9. Pierced | 14. Rough | 19. Weathered |
| 5. Makeup | 10. Pockmarked | 15. Sallow | 20. Whip Scar |

Hair

- | | | | |
|------------|---------------|---------------|--------------|
| 1. Bald | 6. Disheveled | 11. Limp | 16. Ponytail |
| 2. Braided | 7. Dreadlocks | 12. Long | 17. Silky |
| 3. Bristly | 8. Filthy | 13. Luxurious | 18. Topknot |
| 4. Cropped | 9. Frizzy | 14. Mohawk | 19. Wavy |
| 5. Curly | 10. Greased | 15. Oily | 20. Wispy |

Clothing

- | | | | |
|---------------|----------------|---------------|----------------|
| 1. Antique | 6. Elegant | 11. Foreign | 16. Patched |
| 2. Bloody | 7. Fashionable | 12. Frayed | 17. Perfumed |
| 3. Ceremonial | 8. Filthy | 13. Frumpy | 18. Rancid |
| 4. Decorated | 9. Flamboyant | 14. Livery | 19. Torn |
| 5. Eccentric | 10. Stained | 15. Oversized | 20. Undersized |

Virtue

- | | | | |
|---------------|----------------|----------------|---------------|
| 1. Ambitious | 6. Disciplined | 11. Honorable | 16. Merciful |
| 2. Cautious | 7. Focused | 12. Humble | 17. Righteous |
| 3. Courageous | 8. Generous | 13. Idealistic | 18. Serene |
| 4. Courteous | 9. Gregarious | 14. Just | 19. Stoic |
| 5. Curious | 10. Honest | 15. Loyal | 20. Tolerant |

Vice

- | | | | |
|---------------|---------------|----------------|----------------|
| 1. Aggressive | 6. Deceitful | 11. Lazy | 16. Suspicious |
| 2. Arrogant | 7. Flippant | 12. Nervous | 17. Vain |
| 3. Bitter | 8. Gluttonous | 13. Prejudiced | 18. Vengeful |
| 4. Cowardly | 9. Greedy | 14. Reckless | 19. Wasteful |
| 5. Cruel | 10. Irascible | 15. Rude | 20. Whiny |

Speech

- | | | | |
|-------------|-------------|----------------|----------------|
| 1. Blunt | 6. Droning | 11. Mumbling | 16. Dialect |
| 2. Booming | 7. Flowery | 12. Precise | 17. Slow |
| 3. Breathy | 8. Formal | 13. Quaint | 18. Squeaky |
| 4. Cryptic | 9. Gravelly | 14. Rambling | 19. Stuttering |
| 5. Drawling | 10. Hoarse | 15. Rapid-fire | 20. Whispery |

Background

- | | | | |
|--------------|---------------|---------------|----------------|
| 1. Alchemist | 6. Cleric | 11. Magician | 16. Performer |
| 2. Beggar | 7. Cook | 12. Mariner | 17. Pickpocket |
| 3. Butcher | 8. Cultist | 13. Mercenary | 18. Smuggler |
| 4. Burglar | 9. Gambler | 14. Merchant | 19. Student |
| 5. Charlatan | 10. Herbalist | 15. Outlaw | 20. Tracker |

Misfortunes

- | | | | |
|----------------|----------------|---------------|---------------|
| 1. Abandoned | 6. Defrauded | 11. Framed | 16. Pursued |
| 2. Addicted | 7. Demoted | 12. Haunted | 17. Rejected |
| 3. Blackmailed | 8. Discredited | 13. Kidnapped | 18. Replaced |
| 4. Condemned | 9. Disowned | 14. Mutilated | 19. Robbed |
| 5. Cursed | 10. Exiled | 15. Poor | 20. Suspected |

Alignment

1-5:	6-15:	16-20:
Law	Neutrality	Chaos

Equipment

All prices are given in copper pennies. Payment for things like ships, real estate, and so on usually takes the form of trade goods, favors, or oaths of fealty rather than coins.

Tools & Gear

Air Bladder	5
Bear Trap	20
Bedroll	10
Bellows	10
Black Grease	1
Block and Tackle	30
Book (Blank)	300
Book (Reading)	600
Bottle/Vial	1
Bucket	5
Caltrops (bag)	10
Cards with extra Ace	5
Chain (10 ft)	10
Chalk (10 pieces)	1
Chisel	5
Cookpots	10
Drill	10
Face Paint/Makeup	10
Fake Jewels	50
Fishing Rod/Tackle	10
Glass Marbles (bag)	5
Glue (bottle)	1
Grappling Hook	10
Hammer	10
Holy Water	25
Horn	10
Hourglass	300
Incense (packet)	10
Ink, Pot	1
Iron Tongs	10
Ladder (10 ft)	10
Large Sponge	5

Lens	100
Lockpicks	100
Manacles	10
Metal File	5
Mirror (small, silver)	200
Musical Instrument	200
Nails (12)	5
Net	10
Oilskin Bag	5
Oilskin Trousers	10
Padlock and Key	20
Perfume	50
Pick	10
Pole (10ft)	5
Prybar	10
Rope (50ft)	10
Sack	1
Saw	10
Set of Loaded Dice	5
Shovel	10
Small Bell	20
Soap	1
Spike (iron)	5
Spike (wood)	1
Spiked boots	5
Spyglass	1000
Tar (Pot)	10
Tent (3 man)	100
Tent (personal)	50
Twine (300 ft)	5
Waterskin	5
Whistle	5

Light

Candle, 4 hours	1
Lantern	30
Lamp Oil, 4 hours	5
Tinderbox	10
Torch, 1 hour	1

Armor

Shield	40
<i>(Defense +1, 1 slot, 1 quality)</i>	
Helmet	100
<i>(Defense +1, 1 slot, 1 quality)</i>	
Gambeson	60
<i>(Defense 12, 1 slot, 3 quality)</i>	
Brigandine	500
<i>(Defense 13, 2 slots, 4 quality)</i>	
Chain	1200
<i>(Defense 14, 3 slots, 5 quality)</i>	
Half Plate	4000
<i>(Defense 15, 4 slots, 6 quality)</i>	
Full Plate	8000
<i>(Defense 16, 5 slots, 7 quality)</i>	

Weapons

Dagger, Cudgel, Sickle, Staff	5
<i>(d6 damage, 1 slot, 1 hand, 3 quality)</i>	
Spear, Short Sword, Mace, Axe, Flail	10
<i>(d8 damage, 2 slots, 1 hand, 3 quality)</i>	
Polearm, War Hammer, Long Sword, Battle Axe	20
<i>(d10 damage, 3 slots, 2 hands, 3 quality)</i>	
Sling	5
<i>(d6 damage, 1 slot, 1 hand, 3 quality)</i>	
Bow	15
<i>(d8 damage, 2 slots, 2 hands, 3 quality)</i>	
Crossbow	60
<i>(d10 damage, 3 slots, 2 hands, 3 quality)</i>	
Arrows, 20	5
Quiver, capacity 20	10

Clothing

Poor	10
Standard	50
Noble	3000
Furs	5000
Winter	100

Food

Travel rations (1 day)	5
Animal Feed (1 day)	2
Bacon, side of	10
Bread, 1 loaf	1
Cheese, 1 lb	2
Cider, 4 gallons	1
Cod, whole	20
Eggs, 24	1
Flour, 5 lbs	1
Fruit, 1 lb	1
Garlic, bunch	1
Grain, 1 bushel (8 gal.)	4
Herbs, 1 bunch	1
Lard, 5 lbs	1
Onions, 1 bushel	8
Salt, 1 bushel	3
Spices, 1 lb	100
Sugar, 1 lb	12
Wine/ale, bottle	1

Animals

Chicken	1
Cow	100
Chicken	1
Dog, hunting	50
Dog, small but vicious	20
Donkey/Pack Horse	300
Goat	10
Hawk	1000
Horse, riding	1000
Horse, war	10,000
Ox	300
Pig	30
Sheep	15

Lodging

Bed, per night	1
Private room, per night	2
Meal	2
Hot bath	2
Stabling and fodder	2

Ships

Ship, high quality	720/ton
Ship, good quality	480/ton
Ship, used quality	240/ton
Ship, poor quality	120/ton
Raft	50
Fishing boat	500
Sloop	5000
Caravel	25,000
Galleon	125,000

Transport

Carriage	320
Cart	50
Wagon	120

Henchmen

Wages are per day, not including food, supplies, shelter, etc.

Laborer	1
Scribe	2
Archer	3
Mason	4
Man-at-arms, on foot	6
Armorer or Blacksmith	8
Man-at-arms, mounted	12
Master Builder	15
Barber-Surgeon	25
Knight	25

Buildings

Hovel	120
Row House	1200
Craftsman's House	2400
Merchant's House	7200
House with Courtyard	21,600
Guildhall	32,600
Stone Tower	48,000
Temple	75,000
Stronghold	100,000
Cathedral	500,000
Imperial Palace	2,500,000

Rules of Play

Tests

If a character wants to do something where the outcome is uncertain and something is at stake, you make a test. To make a test, add the bonus of an appropriate ability to a d20 roll and try to equal or exceed a difficulty class set by the referee.

Simple	Easy	Standard	Hard	Very Hard
5	10	15	20	25

If the test is opposed by another character, the side doing the rolling must get a total **greater than** the other character's relevant defense score in order to succeed. If they do not succeed, they fail and the other character succeeds. This type of test is called a **versus test**. Note that it doesn't matter which side does the rolling, since the odds of success remain the same.

Game effects that call for saving throws in other OSR games are resolved with standard or versus tests in Knave. If it's not clear what the difficulty of a standard test should be, assume a difficulty of 15.

Example: A wizard casts a fireball spell at a target, who gets a saving throw. This is resolved as a versus test using the caster's Intelligence and the target's Dexterity. The target may roll plus their Dexterity bonus, hoping to exceed the caster's Intelligence defense, or the caster may roll plus their Intelligence bonus, hoping to exceed the target's Dexterity defense.

If there are situational factors that make a test significantly easier or harder, the referee may add a bonus or penalty to the roll (usually in increments of +/-2).

Abilities

Strength: Used for melee attacks and tests requiring physical power. Your number of available item slots is always equal to your Strength defense.

Dexterity: Used for tests requiring poise, speed, and reflexes, such as dodging, climbing, sneaking, balancing, etc.

Constitution: Used for tests to resist poison, sickness, cold, blood loss, etc. Add your Constitution bonus to healing rolls.

Intelligence: Used for tests requiring concentration and precision, such as wielding magic, resisting magical effects, recalling lore, crafting objects, tinkering with machinery, picking pockets, etc.

Wisdom: Used for ranged attacks and tests requiring perception and intuition, such as tracking, navigating, searching for secret doors, detecting illusions, etc.

Charisma: Used for tests to persuade, deceive, interrogate, intimidate, charm, provoke, etc. You may employ a number of henchmen equal to your Charisma bonus.

Item Slots

PCs have a number of item slots equal to their Strength defense. Most items, including spellbooks, potions, a day's provisions, light weapons, tools and so on take up 1 slot, but particularly heavy or bulky items like armor or medium to heavy weapons may take up more slots. Groups of small, identical items may be bundled into the same slot, at the referee's discretion. In a

more "realistic" game, 100 coins can fit in 1 slot, but other referees may increase this to 1000 or allow any number of coins to always fit in one slot.

Item slots are numbered from 1 to 20. If you want to pull out an item during combat, you have to roll the item's number or higher on a d20. If you don't, you can't get to it and will have to try again next round.

Reactions

When the PCs encounter an NPC whose reaction to the party is not obvious, the referee may roll 2d6 on the following table.

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

Monsters

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

Hit Dice/Hit Points: All monster hit dice can be assumed to be d8s unless otherwise specified. To get the monster's hit points, just multiply the number of hit dice they have by 4 or 5.

Armor: Monster AC (if ascending) is identical to Armor defense. If the AC is descending, subtract it from 19 (if it has Original or B/X AC) or from 20 (if it has 1st edition or 2nd edition AC) to find its ascending equivalent.

Attack Bonus: Any attack bonus given is unchanged, and can be added to both melee and ranged attacks. If an attack bonus is not given, assume that it is the same as the monster's number of hit dice.

Damage: Damage remains the same.

Morale: Morale rating remains the same.

Saves: Since OSR monsters usually don't come with ability scores, and Knave uses ability tests to resolve saves, assume that monsters have ability bonuses equal to their level.

Example: a typical 4 HD monster would have a bonus of +4 and a defense of 14 in all of its abilities, unless modified by the referee.

Combat

Use whichever set of old-school rules for combat you prefer. The attack bonus of other systems is replaced with the PC's Strength or Wisdom bonus, and Armor Class is replaced by Armor defense. Attacks should **exceed** the Armor defense rather than equaling or exceeding, for the sake of consistency with versus tests.

Note that just like with ability tests, either the attacker or defender can be the one to make the roll. If the defender rolls, they add their Armor bonus to the roll, looking to exceed the attacker's Strength or Wisdom defense. This allows the referee to run the game with players making all the rolls if they prefer it that way.

Quality

During an attack roll, if the attacker rolls a 20 or the defender rolls a 1, the defender's armor loses 1 point of quality. If the attacker rolls a 1 or the defender rolls a 20, the attacker's weapon loses 1 point of quality. At 0 quality, the item is destroyed. Each point of quality costs 10% of the item's original cost to repair.

Healing

After a meal and a full night's rest, PCs regain a d8 plus their Constitution bonus in hit points.

Magic

The spell lists from any old-school RPG will work perfectly well in Knave, provided that they go up to 9th level. There are many free versions available online, such as the list in OSRIC or here:

http://pandaria.rpgworlds.info/cant/rules/adnd_spells.htm

In Knave, PCs may only cast spells of their level or less, so a level 3 PC could only cast spells of level 0 to 3. Spells are cast out of spell books, which must be held in both hands and read aloud. Each spell book can only be used once per day. Importantly, each spell book only holds a single spell, and each spell book takes up 1 item slot, so if a PC wants to be able to cast a wide variety of spells, they'll have to fill most of their inventory with spell books.

PCs are unable to create, copy or transcribe spell books. In order to gain new spell books, PCs must adventure for them, by either recovering them from dungeons or looting them from other magicians. The higher the level of the spell book, the rarer and more valuable it is. PCs openly carrying high level spell books are likely to be hounded by bandits and wizards looking to acquire them.

When a spell allows for a save, make a versus test between the caster's Intelligence and the target's relevant ability (usually Dexterity for damage spells, Intelligence for mind-altering spells, or Wisdom for Illusions.)

Advancement

Use whatever old-school level-based XP system you prefer. The highest possible level for PCs is 10.

When a PC gains a level, they roll a number of d8s equal to their new level to find their new HP maximum. If the result is less than their previous maximum, increase the maximum by 1.

Gaining a level also causes some of the PC's abilities to increase. The referee can choose to do this in a number of different ways.

- The player raises 3 different abilities of their choice by 1.
- The player raises 3 randomly chosen abilities by 1.
- Roll a d20 for each ability, raising that ability by 1 if the die exceeds the ability's current defense score.
- Each time the PC levels up, they gain 40 ability points. To raise an ability by 1, the player must spend ability points equal to the defense score the ability is being raised to. Leftover ability points can be saved between levels. *Example: raising a defense score from 15 to 16 costs 16 ability points.*