Playing the Game

written by CresthavenRPG Guru | November 14, 2014

Welcome to Cresthaven RPG: Your Gateway to Epic Adventures

Are you ready to embark on an unforgettable journey filled with magic, mystery, and adventure? Whether you're 10 or 40, new to role-playing games, or seeking an alternative to Dungeons and Dragons, Cresthaven RPG offers an exciting and accessible experience that brings stories to life like never before. Dive into a world where your imagination leads the way and your choices shape the narrative.

If you've never played a Role Playing Game before, we have a Cresthaven 101 primer to get you up to speed on terms and concepts!

Discover What Makes Cresthaven RPG Unique

Cresthaven RPG is more than just a game—it's a collaborative storytelling experience. Picture this: you and your friends gather around a table, ready to explore a rich and vibrant world. Each roll of the dice has the power to alter your characters' destinies, but it's your creativity and teamwork that drive the story forward. Instead of competing against each other, you'll work together to overcome obstacles, unravel mysteries, and build an epic tale of your own.

As you begin your adventure, you'll need to decide who will take on the role of the Dungeon Master (DM) and who will play the Player Characters (PCs). The DM acts as the storyteller, crafting the adventure, describing the world, and keeping some secrets hidden behind the DM screen. Meanwhile, the other players each create and control a PC, bringing their characters to life through their actions and decisions. Whether you're battling fearsome monsters, exploring ancient ruins, or negotiating with enigmatic figures, every moment is an opportunity to contribute to a story that's uniquely yours. The group will typically discuss and choose who is most excited to lead the adventure and who is eager to jump into the action, ensuring everyone plays a role in the unfolding narrative.

Why Cresthaven RPG is Perfect for You

- **Easy to Learn:** New to RPGs? No problem! Cresthaven is designed to be simple and approachable, even for first-timers. You'll be ready to dive into your first adventure in just minutes.
- **Creative Freedom:** In Cresthaven, your imagination is your greatest tool. Want to search for hidden treasures? Go ahead. Think your character should attempt a daring negotiation with a creature? Give it a try! The game is all about exploring possibilities and making the story your own.
- **A World Full of Adventure:** Set in the captivating Village of Cresthaven, your journey will be packed with fascinating characters, thrilling encounters, and secrets waiting to be discovered. Each session brings new adventures and exciting plot twists.

We offer some great resources to get you started right now:

- Pregenerated Characters
- The Cresthaven RPG Rules Reference Guide
- The Learn While You Play dungeon: Goblin Raiders
- New Player Tips
- New Dungeon Master Tips

How Cresthaven RPG Works: A Simple Overview

Cresthaven RPG revolves around storytelling and imagination. Unlike traditional board games, where the focus is on winning or losing, RPGs like Cresthaven let you and your friends craft and explore a shared narrative. You'll describe what your character does, and the dice add a layer of chance to see how successful you are.

Forget about complicated maps and miniatures—Cresthaven uses a style known as "Theater of the Mind." This approach relies on your imagination to describe actions and settings. While props and maps can be used to enhance the experience, they're not required for a great game.

At its core, Cresthaven RPG is about storytelling. The rules and dice are there to add excitement and determine the outcomes of challenges, but the real focus is on creating and experiencing a compelling story together.

Below we join a group of adventurers exploring ancient ruins..

A Peek Into an Adventure

Imagine this: You and your party are cautiously making your way down a narrow, dimly lit corridor in a forgotten dungeon. The flickering torches cast eerie shadows on the ancient tapestries that line the walls, and the air is thick with the scent of dust and decay. From behind a sturdy, locked door, you hear muffled sounds that send chills down your spine. What will you do? Will you investigate the mysterious noises? Search for hidden secrets? With a roll of the dice, your next move could reveal what lies in the shadows.

Here's a glimpse of how a basic game session might play out in Cresthaven RPG:

Three adventurers embark on an epic quest:

- **John** — The Dungeon Master, the weaver of tales and arbiter of fate.
- **Mike** — Cedric, the Elven Wizard, whose arcane powers are matched only by his sharp wit.
- **Sally** — Joesy, the Human Thief, always one step ahead of danger with a knack for finding trouble.

DM (John): The narrow corridor is dimly lit by flickering torches, the ancient tapestries on the walls barely visible in the gloom. The air is thick with the scent of dust and decay, and from behind a sturdy, locked door, you hear muffled sounds that send chills down your spine.

Joesy (Sally): My instincts are on high alert. I want to inspect the corridor carefully for any hidden traps or secret doors. There's no telling what dangers might be lurking in the shadows.

Cedric (Mike): I'll use my keen elven senses to scan our surroundings. There could be something here that's not immediately visible to the untrained eye.

DM (John): Sally, roll your d20 and add your Search bonus.

Joesy (Sally): *Dice clatters* I rolled a 12, plus my Search bonus of +2, for a total of 14.

DM (John): Joesy, your sharp eyes catch the faintest movement behind the locked door—something or someone is there, watching. Meanwhile, Cedric, your elven heritage serves you well. Your notice score is enough to see a cleverly concealed door behind one of the tapestries, hidden from less observant eyes.

Before you can react, a menacing green creature with glowing red eyes and a mouth full of razor-sharp teeth bursts through another tapestry, growling fiercely. It's time to act! Everyone, roll for initiative!

Congratulations! You've just role-played your first game in Cresthaven RPG. What will your next move be? Will you face the creature head-on, retreat to safety, or try to negotiate with it? The decision is yours, and as you roll the dice, you'll collectively shape the unfolding story.

Deep Dive Into the Rules

Feel free to mix and match these rules to tailor your Cresthaven RPG experience to your liking. We encourage you to experiment and find the combinations that bring the most fun to your table. Your adventure, your rules! Have a great idea or a unique rule of your own? Share it in the comments below and let's keep the creativity flowing!

Player Roles

There are two crucial roles that players take on in the game, each one indispensable in creating an epic adventure that will leave you on the edge of your seat!

Dungeon Master (DM)

The Dungeon Master is like the conductor of an orchestra, guiding the game's flow and shaping the story's destiny. They're the game's referee and storyteller, responsible for bringing the setting to life, playing the roles of its inhabitants, and even throwing some curveballs at the players! They're the ones leading the players forward, placing tantalizing breadcrumbs for them to follow and epic quests for them to undertake. The DM is the mastermind behind the entire game and ensures that everyone is having a blast!

See Dungeon Mastery to get started as the Dungeon Master.

Player Character (PC)

They're the fearless heroes of the story, the ones battling dangerous monsters, exploring treacherous ruins, and unraveling ancient mysteries. Each player character is unique, with their own backstory and set of skills that come into play during the game. Together, they form a formidable team that interacts with the setting's inhabitants and with each other. They engage in epic battles, overcome daunting challenges, and gather treasure and knowledge, all while earning experience points that will make them even more powerful over time.

So if you're ready to embark on an epic journey filled with danger, adventure, and excitement, choose your role wisely and get ready to explore a world of endless possibilities!

To get started, each player should select or create a character.

The Party

In Cresthaven RPG, players don't go it alone. They join forces to form a team called the "Party." Together, they navigate treacherous dungeons, fight fearsome monsters, and solve complex challenges. But this isn't just a loose collection of individuals working together. It's a full-fledged team activity.

The Caller: The Voice of the Party

Every team needs a spokesperson, and that's exactly what the Caller is. This player speaks for the entire Party, conveying their thoughts and plans to the DM. When the DM asks "What will the Party do next?" the players discuss their ideas and come to an agreement. Then, the Caller relays that information to the DM. They're not the leader of the Party, but rather the one who keeps the communication flowing. Furthermore the caller keeps track of the marching order and the location of any hirelings or npcs working with the party.

The Cartographer: The Mapper of the Party

When exploring unknown territories, it's easy to get lost. That's where the Cartographer comes in. This player keeps track of the Party's location on a map. They use graph paper or other tools to record movements and important details for reference later. With a Cartographer in the Party, they'll never get lost or miss a crucial turn.

If you are new to Role Playing Games, here are some tips to help you in your journey: New Role Player Tips

How to Play Cresthaven RPG

The Dice

One of the first things a new Cresthaven RPG player may puzzle over is the weird dice used in the game. Cresthaven RPG uses six polyhedral dice, with four, six, eight, 10, 12 and 20 sides. They're what you use to figure out if what you're trying to do works.

From left to right: d4, d6, d8, d10, d100, d12, d20

In Cresthaven RPG the dice are identified by a lowercase "d" followed by the die's total number of sides, so a 20-sided die (an icosahedron) is a d20. This shorthand also tells you the number of times the die needs to be rolled: 2d8 would mean you need to roll the eight-sided die twice (or roll two eight-sided dice) and then add the numbers.

> Dice are very inexpensive and can be purchased from a Local Game Store or from Amazon for less than $10.

How To Use The Dice

When playing Cresthaven RPG checks are only used in a very narrow scope. Checks are only made when the players want to do something (non-combat), and only after the DM decides what the check, if any, would be. It is first and foremost about determining HOW something is being done and WHAT the result is intended before any checks can be set up.

Special Rules Concerning Dice

Rolling Advantage / Disadvantage: Advantage lets you roll 2d20 and take the better result, **disadvantage** takes the worse. This can be used anywhere that a player rolls d20 — saving throw, attack, or difficulty check.

Teamwork: Attempting an action collectively allows for one check, using the highest player's ability bonus AND advantage

Natural 20: In addition a roll of a natural 20 against any check always succeeds.

Critical Hit: Any player rolling a **natural 20** in combat always results in double damage (double rolled damage). Some classes can score critical hits on 18, 19 or 20

Deal with the DM: Once per game, at the DMs' discretion, a player may choose to make a Deal with the DM where in the player change change one d20 roll for a natural 20, but the DM then can change any other roll of the players to a natural 1.

When you roll, you and your DM will be comparing your result to a Difficulty Check (DC). If the result of your roll equals or exceeds the DC what the player is trying to do will succeed. It's up to the DM to drive the party forward and if the DM wants them to hear something, see something, or open a lock, then they should — this is the fudging of the dice.

> For example, your player party is exploring a dungeon. The Dungeon Master would describe the room you are in:
>
> "You are in a dark hallway. You can see light shining faintly down the hallway. To you right there is a wooden door. It is locked. Would you like to pick the lock or continue toward the light?"
>
> The player's discuss what they'd like to do next. The party decides that the thief will attempt to pick the lock. The DM announces that it is a normal lock (secretly setting the difficulty to 17). The thief rolls d20 and adds his pick locks bonus:17! The DM says, "door clicks and it now unlocked."
>
> Carefully the party's thief leans into the door and listens for sounds, again he rolls a d20 and the DM determines whether or not they hear anything.

How do you figure out what happens?

1) the players tell the DM what they are trying to do.

The players tell the DM what they are trying to do. Examples could be: Climbing a wall, picking a lock, or deceiving the guards. Specifically what they'd like to happen.

*Note: Players should **never** ask **IF** they can do something. They need to say what they are trying to do and then it's up to the DM to make it happen (or fail miserably).*

2) the players narrate how this is to be accomplished

The player then goes into detail about what the character does. "I use my grappling hook and attempt to climb" or "Using my thief abilities I use my lock picks and pick the lock" or "I pull the guard aside and I tell him this big long story about …" this is the role-playing that the game is all about. Check out ideas on how to use other ability scores to accomplish the same tasks.

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> **Notice:** Notice is a passive ability (always on) that the DM uses to roll against the players for things like spotting secret doors or ambushes. The character's notice number is their Wisdom + Ability Focus (if focused in Wisdom) + 10

3) The DM decides if the action is actually possible, if a check is necessary, and what ability score to use.

Depending on the what and how of the action the players want to take, the DM uses their common sense to answer these three questions.

1. Is this possible at all?
2. Do we need to roll to add some random results to the outcome?
3. What ability score bonus would apply for that scenario?

Heroic Points

Each session that a player attends earns their character 1 heroic point. The points add up and remain with the character. (We track them with RPG coins or glass beads)

The players can then choose to trade their Heroics for the following:

1. Re-roll of a dice roll and keep the new roll
2. Add advantage to any roll
3. An additional action point in a combat round
4. Healing Surge (roll your hit dice and recover that many Hit Points)

Extra heroics can be awarded by the DM for the playing doing something special or innovative in the game. I've been know to award these for a great plan, being in character, and even for and awesome battle result.

Player's characters should use these points at times of drama (or whenever they want), but we've found that they add a great BOOM just at the right moment. Something like that critical attack that slays the dragon or talking their way out of trouble with the city guard.

4) Roll dice and add bonuses

If the action is possible, the DM will determine the Difficulty Check for success, then players (or DM if it is a secret check) roll d20 and add their bonuses. Compare the roll to the Difficulty Check (see below) to figure out what happens to the players.

Difficulty check: This is either a passive check with a set difficulty (DC) or and active check where the player and DM roll and compare numbers. You must meet or exceed the number to succeed.

Encumbrance, Movement, and Time

When players embark on an adventure, they must choose what to bring with them. This is crucial as it affects how fast they move and what they can carry. For example, a gold chest can be incredibly heavy! Additionally, movement is important in the game, just like time, and is affected by the weight of what characters carry. Movement determines the order of actions, who goes first, who goes last, and who falls prey to traps.

In the game, time is also tracked by the DM. Many effects, such as spells and torches, have a time limit. When time runs out, it can affect all aspects of the game. For instance, imagine being deep underground with no light to guide you because your lantern ran out of oil. As time runs out, resources become scarce, and characters must think fast to survive the adventure.

Encumbrance

Encumbrance is a measure of how much weight your character can carry before they start to slow down. Your maximum weight carried is determined by your Strength score plus four, multiplied by 25 lbs. If you carry more than half of your maximum weight, you are considered *encumbered*. When you are encumbered, your movement speed is reduced by half, and you have disadvantage on ability checks, attack rolls, and saving throws that use Strength, Dexterity, or Constitution.

Resource Management

In Cresthaven RPG, resources such as rations, arrows, and treasure play a crucial role in managing your character's survival and progress. Rations are

essential for keeping your character fed and in good health, particularly during extended adventures. Each ration consumed decreases your available supply, so it's important to keep a careful count of how many you have left. Arrows, used for ranged attacks, also need to be monitored. Each time you use an arrow, you reduce your stock, making it necessary to replenish your supply to avoid running out in critical moments. Additionally, tracking your treasure is vital for managing your character's wealth and purchasing items or services within the game.

To effectively track these resources, use your character sheet to record quantities and updates as you progress through the game. Regularly check and update your inventory to reflect any changes from your actions or findings. For instance, after consuming a ration or using an arrow, note the adjustment on your character sheet. Keeping an accurate count of your resources ensures that you are always prepared for the challenges ahead and can make strategic decisions based on your current supplies. This ongoing management adds depth to the gameplay and enhances the overall experience by requiring careful planning and resourcefulness.

Movement

Movement determines how fast your character can traverse the game world. Each character's base movement speed is determined by their race, class, and abilities. For example, an unencumbered human typically has a base movement speed of 30 feet per round. Other races or classes may have different base speeds.

Your party's overall movement speed is determined by the slowest member. This means that everyone in the party generally moves at the same speed unless specific circumstances modify individual speeds.

Movement Modes:

1. **Normal Movement:** During normal movement, characters move at their base speed. There is a slight penalty to the party's Notice (-2) while moving normally. This reflects the distraction and focus on moving quickly rather than being fully aware of their surroundings.
2. **Cautious Movement:** When moving cautiously, such as when being quiet or mapping, characters move at half their base speed. There is no modifier to the party's Notice (0) in this mode. This mode allows characters to maintain their standard level of situational awareness.
3. **Sneaking:** Characters moving in stealth mode move at 1/10th their base speed. There is a bonus to the party's Notice (+2) while sneaking. This bonus reflects their heightened awareness while actively trying to avoid detection.

Additional Movement Rules:

Running: Characters can choose to run, allowing them to double their current movement speed. However, the duration for which they can maintain this

increased speed is determined by their Constitution modifier.

- Characters can run for a number of rounds equal to their Constitution modifier (minimum of 1 round).
- After the running duration expires, characters must make a Constitution saving throw with a DC of 10 + the number of rounds they've been running beyond their Constitution modifier. On a failed save, they become exhausted.
- Characters can choose to stop running voluntarily before reaching exhaustion.

Swimming: Creatures can choose to stand in waist-deep water or swim. This is considered Difficult terrain. Furthermore if a character or creature is underwater, fire attacks do no damage, and all melee attacks are at disadvantage doing 1/2 damage (rounded up). Ranged attacks underwater are not possible, nor are cast spells unless the characters can speak underwater somehow.

Terrain Effects

The battlefield is more than just flat ground. Varied terrain can dramatically impact the flow of combat, offering strategic advantages and disadvantages to both attackers and defenders. From the sucking mud of swamps to the treacherous slopes of mountains, the ground itself can become an ally or a foe. Understanding the terrain and using it to your advantage is a key element of tactical combat.

- **Difficult:** Whenever anyone moves through difficult terrain they are effected by the Slow condition (Movement is reduced to 1/2. You can only attack every other round.)
- **Unstable:** Whenever anyone moves across unstable terrain, anyone moving through this terrain must make a DC 8 Dexterity save at the start of a turn (every 10 minutes). On a failed save, a creature falls prone.
- **Elevated:** Ranged attackers on higher ground (at least 10 feet higher than their target) have Advantage on ranged attack rolls
- **Narrow:** The area is only wide enough for creatures to move in single file. This means only the creature in front can make melee attacks against enemies in the passage. Ranged attacks can still be made normally.
- **Steep:** The incline is so steep that climbing is required to move across it. Movement speed is halved, and moving uphill must make a Climbing or Strength check (DC 10) at the start of their turn. On a failed save, they fall taking 1d6 damage per 10' fallen, cumulative (eg: +2d6 for the second 10 feet fallen, +3d6 for the third 10 feet, etc.)

Time

Time is measured in turns, rounds, and segments. One turn is equal to 10 minutes, one round is equal to 1 minute, and one segment is equal to 6 seconds. Time is used to track how long it takes to perform various actions, such as searching a room or traveling a certain distance. The Dungeon Master will track time and let the players know when significant amounts of time have passed.

Sound: Moving quickly or running can create a lot of noise, which can alert enemies to your presence or cause them to flee. If you are moving quickly or running, you must make a Stealth check to avoid being heard. If you fail the check, the Dungeon Master may decide to have enemies ambush you or flee from the noise.

Scarcity: Resources such as food, water, and ammunition may be scarce. The Dungeon Master may track these resources and let the players know when they are running low. Players should be careful not to waste resources, as they may be unable to find more easily. For each day that a character does not eat or drink, the player must make a Constitution save vs DC10 (+1 per day) or gain the Starving / Dehydrated condition.

Characters can live for …

- **3 minutes without air:** This is the most accurate part of the rule. Deprived of oxygen, brain damage can occur within minutes, and death follows shortly after.
- **3 days without water:** Again, this depends on factors like activity level, temperature, and humidity. In hot environments, dehydration can occur much faster.
- **3 weeks without food:** While the human body can survive for extended periods without food, it's important to remember that malnutrition and weakness will set in quickly, impacting your ability to find help or resources.

These rules will help players and Dungeon Masters keep track of important resources and time in your game. It is important to follow these rules to ensure a fair and balanced game.

Light and Visibility

Light and visibility play a crucial role in any adventurer's life. From navigating treacherous dungeons to outsmarting foes in the dead of night, understanding how light interacts with the environment is key to success. This system explores the different light levels and visibility conditions, their impact on various checks, and how they can be manipulated to gain the upper hand in any situation.

Light Levels

Normal Light: This is the standard lighting condition, similar to a bright day or a well-lit room. No penalties apply to vision or checks.

Low Light: This includes dim light conditions like dusk, dawn, or a torch-lit corridor. Creatures with darkvision have normal vision, others have disadvantage on Wisdom checks that rely on sight.

Darkness: This is complete darkness, with no natural light source. Creatures without darkvision have the Blinded condition. Creatures with darkvision can see normally in darkness.

Magical Darkness: This functions similarly to regular darkness, but it effects darkvision and it cannot be dispelled by non-magical light sources.

Visibility

Clear: This is the standard visibility condition where there are no obstructions to sight. Players can see clearly up to their movement value.

Obscured: This represents situations where vision is impaired by fog, smoke, heavy rain, or magical effects. Creatures in obscured areas have disadvantage on any checks that rely on sight including ranged attacks, visibility is reduced to 1/2 of the normal distance.

Additional Considerations:

Light Sources: Different light sources have varying ranges of illumination. A torch might illuminate a 15-foot radius, while a lantern might illuminate a 30-foot radius.

Magical Light: Certain spells or magical items can create light or dispel darkness.

Darkvision: This ancestry trait allows creatures to see in darkness as if it were low light.

Leveling Up

As the characters explore the dungeon, all of their actions result in a combined score, known as experience points (XP). The DM is keeping track of your experience points and at the end of the game session, each player will receive a number that will advance their character forward with better bonus, health, and strength.

Sounds exciting, right? Everything you need to play this game is on this website.

Next Steps

Players.

- Ready to make a character? Start creating your character here!
- Not interested in making a character? We've already created a few for you to use.

Dungeon Masters.

- See Dungeon Mastery to get started as the Dungeon Master.
- Check out the Goblin Raiders Adventure for a "learn as you play" game

Questions? Comments? Post a Comment below!