

HELLEBORE

QUICK RULES · PLAYTEST V0.2

Hellebore is a tabletop roleplaying game built for fast, fun combat. You roll a d20, add one of your four abilities, and try to beat a target number. Your class is a deck of cards, a turn is 4 action points, and movement is two lanes instead of a grid. Talking, exploring and telling stories work as in any tabletop game; Hellebore only changes how you fight.

ROLLING

- **Check** (outside combat): d20 + ability + skill training, against a difficulty the GM sets.
- **Attack**: d20 + ability against the target's **Defense**. Melee with a one-handed weapon or bare hands: Might or Agility, whichever is better. Two-handed: Might. Ranged: Agility. Spells use the ability on the card.
- **Control card**: d20 + ability against **10 + the target's resisting ability**.
- **Advantage / disadvantage**: roll 2d20 and keep the higher / lower.

8 EASY	12 MEDIUM	15 HARD	18 VERY HARD
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Suggested targets, not a rule. At low levels, call mostly Easy and Medium checks.

- **Meet the target** to succeed. **Beat it by 10+**: critical success. **Miss by 10+**: critical failure. A natural 20 or 1 does nothing special.
- **Critical hit**: double the damage total. Against a character, the GM rolls a d6: on 1–2 they suffer a traumatic event.
- **Critical failure on an attack**: roll a d6. On a 1 it hits the nearest ally in reach or range, and the attacker suffers a traumatic event. The GM can overrule.

THE FOUR ABILITIES

Each score is a bonus from **–1 to +5**, added straight to the d20.

ABILITY	IN COMBAT	SKILLS	RESISTS
Might	HP, melee and thrown damage, Defense (Might classes)	Athletics, Endurance, Survival, Intimidation	Burned, exhausted
Agility	Defense (Agility classes), ranged attacks, initiative	Acrobatics, Stealth, Sleight of hand, Performance	—
Mind	Crafts and magic items (no magic of its own)	Investigation, Lore, Nature, Medicine, Perception	Confused
Will	Innate magic	Persuasion, Deception, Insight, Resolve	Charmed, stunned

MAKING A CHARACTER

1. **Race**: Human. *Versatile*: +1 to any one score. *Quick learner*: learning a new card takes half the time.
2. **Class**: gives a role, a 24-card starter deck, an HP bonus and a **specialty**: advantage on three skills. Survivor (Survival, Endurance, Athletics), Scout (Stealth, Perception, Acrobatics),

Sage (Lore, Investigation, Nature), Face (Persuasion, Insight, Deception). You may swap it.

3. **Scores**: all start at 0. Add the human +1. Optionally move 1 point from any score to another, once (it can go below –1, but not below –3; proposal). Or use your class's suggested scores.
4. **Skills**: 3 training points, up to +2 per skill. Optionally take up to 2 points away from skills (down to –2) to spend on others.
5. **Loadout**: your class's default, or any armor and one weapon you meet the Might requirement for.

MAX HP = 10 + Might + class HP bonus.

DEFENSE = base defense + armor bonus. Base defense is 10 + Agility or Might (your class sets it). Medium armor caps the Agility part at +1; heavy armor at 0. Might is never capped.

EVERY TURN: 4 AP and a hand of 7 cards.

ARMOR	BONUS	DRAWBACK
Clothes	+0	—
Leather jerkin	+1	Light: none
Chain shirt	+2	Medium: disadvantage on Stealth
Plate harness	+2	Heavy: disadvantage on Stealth, Acrobatics. Might +2
Round shield	+1	One-handed weapons only. Might +2

WEAPON	DAMAGE	AP	NOTES
Unarmed	d4	2	Always available
Arming sword	d6	2	One-handed
Mace	d6	2	One-handed; +1 to hit armor +2 or more
Greatsword	d10	3	Two-handed; Might +1
Halberd	d10	3	Two-handed; Might +1; any lane
Shortbow, crossbow	d8	3	Ranged; any lane

THE PLAYTEST CLASSES

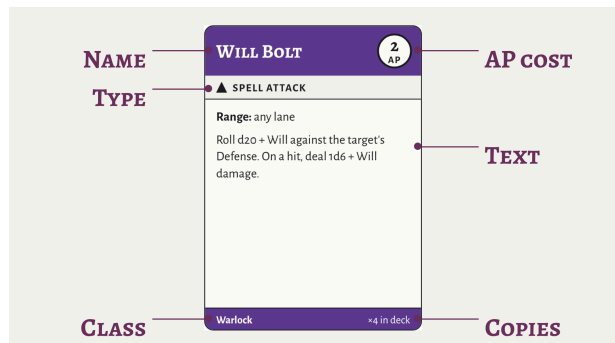
CLASS	ABILITY · ROLE	LANE	HP	DEF.
Warlock	Will · Burst damage	Back	9	11
Trickster	Agility · Crowd control	Back	11	13
Duelist	Agility · Tank	Front	14	13
Warcaller	Might · Support	Front	16	15
Alchemist	Mind · Support	Back	11	11

HP and Defense with the suggested scores and default loadout.

CARDS AND DECKS

- **Collection**: every card you own. **Outside combat** you can use any of them directly, with no drawing.

- **Deck:** the cards you bring to a fight: Neutral cards (like the basic attack) and your own class's cards. At least 20 cards, no maximum. Rebuild it any time outside combat.
- **Copies:** up to 4 of a class card, 2 of a Destroyed card, any number of Neutral cards. Copies' effects add up unless a card says it doesn't stack.



The parts of a card.

1. **Start of a fight:** shuffle your whole deck and draw 7.
2. **Start of each of your turns:** draw until you hold 7. Cards you don't play stay in your hand; there is no end-of-turn discard.
3. **Draw pile empty:** add a **Fatigue** card (unplayable, takes a slot) to the discard pile, shuffle the discard pile into the draw pile, keep drawing.
4. **Cycle:** once per turn, discard 1 card and draw 1 for free. Each extra cycle that turn costs 1 AP.
5. **End of a fight:** every card returns to your deck, Destroyed cards included. Fatigue is removed.

COMBAT

STARTING A FIGHT

Every player rolls d20 + Agility; the GM averages the rolls, rounding down. **Below 10** the creatures act first; **10 or above** the players do. A surprised party automatically loses; an ambushing party automatically wins. Everyone starts with full AP and a full hand.

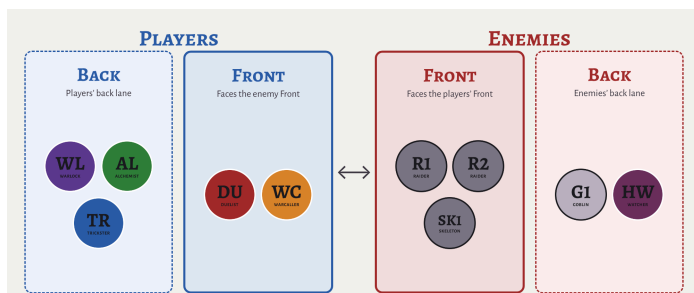
A ROUND

One side acts, then the other. The players choose their own order; the GM chooses the creatures'.

YOUR TURN

1. **Draw** to 7. Start-of-turn effects happen (*burned* deals 1d4).
 2. **Spend 4 AP** on cards: they cost what they say. Changing lanes costs 1 AP. You can play the same card more than once if you have copies in hand.
 3. **End your turn.** AP you didn't spend can pay for Instants until your next turn. Then it is lost: AP resets to 4.
- **Basic attack:** 2 AP bare-handed or one-handed, 3 AP otherwise. Damage from your weapon.
 - **Talking to an enemy:** the first thing you say each turn is free; each further reply costs 1 AP.
 - **Instants** can be played on any turn, even in response, with AP you kept. Responses go on a **stack** and resolve last in, first out. Only players and bosses use the stack.

LANES



Players' Back, players' Front, enemies' Front, enemies' Back.

- Each side has a **Front** and a **Back** lane. Any number of creatures can share a lane.
- **Melee** attacks hit only the enemy Front lane, unless the card says **any lane**. **Ranged** attacks and spells hit the lanes their card says.
- **Changing lanes** costs 1 AP, for every creature.
- **Empty Front:** if a side's Front is empty, its Back counts as the Front.
- Creatures stay on their own side. An area that covers your allies hits them.
- **Area cards** say which lanes and whose side they hit, or are centered on a target and hit the creatures beside it in the same lane. Nothing is hit unless the card says so.

CARD WORDS

Instant	Played off your turn with saved AP
Destroyed	Leaves your deck until the combat ends
Defensive	Avoids or reduces damage (never below 0)
Melee	Close weapon attack: enemy Front only
Ranged	A shot, throw or spell: the lanes the card says
Thrown	Ranged by throwing (a net, a flask): any lane
Any lane	Can target the Front or the Back lane
Free	Costs 0 AP

CONDITIONS

CONDITION	EFFECT	ENDS
Burned	1d4 damage at the start of each of your turns	1 AP to put out, or after 2 turns
Charmed	Can't attack or harm the charmer	Charmer harms you, or end of your next turn
Exhausted	1 less AP each turn	End of combat, or a rest
Confused	Your attacks hit a random creature in range (never you)	End of your next turn
Stunned	Next turn only 1 AP; no Instants until then	After that turn
Frightened	No melee attacks	Medium (12) Resolve check at end of your turn
Grappled	Can't change lanes	Break free: 2 AP + Might or Acrobatics check

CONDITION	EFFECT	ENDS
Blessed	Add 1d4 to any roll	Start of the blesser's next turn

If a confused attack hits an ally, the attacker suffers a traumatic event (the GM can overrule).

WHEN THINGS GO WRONG

DOWN AT 0 HP

- HP never goes below 0. A character at 0 HP is **unconscious** and rolls a **death save** at the start of each players' phase: d20, **10+** is a success.
- **3 successes:** stable (still at 0 HP, unconscious). **3 failures:** the character dies. Damage at 0 HP counts as a failure (two on a critical hit).
- **Any healing** wakes them up. An ally can spend **2 AP** to stabilize them with no roll, but a character stabilized instead of healed automatically suffers a traumatic event.
- **Monsters die at 0 HP.**

RESTS

Full rest: all HP back; ends *exhausted*. **Short rest:** (1d6 + Might, minimum 1) × your level in HP; at most 2 between full rests; ends *exhausted*.

TRAUMATIC EVENTS AND QUIRKS

Triggers: dropping to 0 HP (d6: 1–2), a critical hit against you (d6: 1–2), being stabilized instead of healed (automatic), hitting an ally by friendly fire (automatic). The GM can also call one, sparingly.

Roll a **d4**: 1–3 an **affliction**, 4 a **virtue**; then roll a d6 on that quirk table. No quirk twice, and everyone can see every quirk.

Treatment (2 weeks and money): 25% new affliction · 50% nothing · 25% remove an affliction or gain a virtue.

FOR THE GM: CREATURES

THREAT	AP	TOUGHNESS	DMG/HIT	LASTS (PARTY OF 5)
Minion	3	~6	~3	Dies to one hit
Standard	4	~20	~5	1–2 rounds
Elite	5	~40	~7	About 3 rounds
Boss	6	~80	~9 + specials	About 6 rounds

- Most creatures have a **hand of actions** and no deck. On its turn, pick any action it can pay for, and repeat until it is out of AP. Destroyed actions work once per combat.
- Only bosses and mythicals use Instants and the stack; a boss plays one Instant per round for free. *Relentless* creatures act after every player's turn, with fewer AP.
- Put melee creatures in their Front lane and ranged creatures and casters in their Back lane. Smaller party: multiply toughness by players ÷ 5.