

SURVIVAL A MINI GAME OF THE ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE

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ZOMBIES ARE REAL: SOCIETY COLLAPSES AROUND YOU AND YOU'RE TRYING TO SURVIVE

This game has two types of players.

- **The Narrator:** one player who presents challenges in the world.
- **The Survivors:** the other players who face and try to overcome them to survive at least for a little while.

Each Survivor has a name and a role they played before the zombies came: construction worker, police officer, teacher, student, stockbroker. Mechanically, the game defines them by one statistic: their **Survival Die**.

THE CORE MECHANICS

Your **Survival Die (SD)** determines your Survivor's abilities, resources, and luck. Your starting Survival Die is a **d6**.

A Survivor rolls their SD whenever they face a danger that threatens their survival. If you encounter a lone zombie, roll your SD. Navigating a dangerous maze of abandoned cars, trying not to draw attention to yourself? Roll your SD. Trying to avoid the military taking you into a detention camp? You guessed it, roll that SD! When the zombie horde is facing you down, well, it's time to roll that Survival Die, maybe one last time.

Each challenge you face has a **Danger Level (DL)**, determined by the Narrator, from 1 to 4.

- A lone zombie in the middle of the road at noon may be DL 1. The same zombie on a moonless night in a cornfield may be DL 3.
- Facing ten zombies from a well-defended metal tower, armed with automatic weapons, might be a DL 1, or DL 2 if the tower is rickety and rusted.

The Narrator sets up the situation; Survivors narrate their ideas, strategies, and plans; the Narrator determines the DL based on context; the Survivors roll the SD to determine the outcome. Narrators don't make rolls; they determine the DL and set up the next challenge.

All Survivors roll their SD whenever they face a collective challenge. Success and failure are individual; those who fail face the consequences. Those who succeed carry on facing the next challenge. Cooperation and teamwork should be part of the planning and considered by the Narrator when determining the DL.

The Narrator should consider the number of Survivors, their abilities, and their resources as represented by their SD and the story they are telling together. A lone Survivor facing a dozen zombies may be DL 3, while a dozen Survivors fighting the same number of zombies from a fortified position may be DL 1.

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RESOLUTION AND CONSEQUENCES

If an SD roll is **greater than the DL**, you succeed. Narrate how your Survivor overcame the challenge.

If your roll is **equal to or less than the DL**, you fail. On failure, reduce your Survival Die by one step. If your SD is a d6 and you face a DL of 3, if you roll a 2, you fail, and your SD becomes a d4.

- No SD may be lower than a d4. Failure against a DL with a d4 cannot lower the die any further.
- A Survivor with a d4 SD cannot succeed at a DL 4 challenge. This is intentional, emulating dwindling resources and the inevitable spiral of doom in a zombie apocalypse.

Gaining Benefits: If you succeed against a challenge and roll the highest number on your SD, you gain a benefit. You find new equipment, learn a new trick, or something else that improves your survival. Increase your Die one step, from d4 to d6, or d6 to d8. No SD may be higher than d8. A Survivor with a d4 SD rolling against a DL of 4 cannot succeed and thus cannot gain a benefit.

Dying: If you roll a 1 on the SD at any time, your Survivor dies.

Make one roll for each challenge; use the result to move the story forward. If the Survivors succeed, the player describes how their Survivor overcame the challenge. If they fail, the

Narrator describes the failure, which may make the next challenge even harder.

Pre-Apocalypse Roles: Once per session, a Survivor who convinces the Narrator that their pre-apocalypse role can help with the challenge can turn a failure into a success. They may also expend this once-per-session ability to avoid death when rolling a 1; the action still fails, and their die drops a step, but the character survives.

Example Danger Levels

(For a group of four Survivors with a d6 Survival Die)

- **DL 1:** Fighting a dozen slow zombies in the road. *(A lone Survivor with a d4 SD might face DL 2 or even 3!)*
- **DL 2:** Wandering through an abandoned house at night with few light sources, where an unknown number of zombies lurk in the darkness.
- **DL 2:** Scavenging for food and water in an abandoned supermarket to survive. *(After a week or more of low resources, the DL might be 3).*
- **DL 3:** Fighting a band of well-armed human scavengers with a fully functional tank, intent on taking all your resources.
- **DL 4:** Escaping a zombie horde that descends upon the group.

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Note: Not all challenges have to be combat. Finding medicine for a sick ally in an abandoned hospital without being detected, or repairing a generator during a winter storm, are good examples. Fixing a generator to plan for winter may be DL 2, or DL 3 if lacking tools. Fixing it during a winter storm as zombies descend on your shelter may be DL 4.

OPTIONAL RULES

Advantage & Disadvantage

If Survivors come up with a clever plan, leverage a vital resource, or utilize their pre-collapse role, the Narrator may grant advantage: roll the SD twice and use the highest result. Likewise, a series of failures is a story situation that places them in greater peril (zombies attack while fighting scavengers); the Narrator may call for rolls with disadvantage. Roll the SD twice and use the lowest result.

All Survivors

Each player has a Survivor, and each takes turns being the Narrator for one challenge. Assume their Survivor overcomes the challenge but never gains advantage. If all other Survivors die during a challenge, the Narrator's Survivor dies as well.

Dead Survivors Become Doom

When a Survivor dies, they become a Doom. During each challenge, a Doom rolls a d6; on a 6, they can cancel one Survivor's success. A success becomes a failure, or a gained benefit is lost. Multiple Dooms can haunt the Survivors.

Increased Survivability

Survivors don't die on a 1; they immediately reduce their die by one step, then roll again with the lower die. If they roll equal to or under the DL, then they die. If they roll higher, they survive but have disadvantage on their next challenge. If a Survivor rolls a 1 on a d4, they cannot reduce the die. They immediately roll the d4 again; if the result is equal to or under the DL (including another 1), they die.

Continuing Stories

If you want to play a series of adventures, the SD resets to d6 for all players at the start of the next session. Players who died create a new Survivor. Players who survive gain a token for each adventure they survive. They can spend the token to make one roll with advantage. Once used, the token does not replenish, but you can save tokens from one adventure to the next.

Resources & Settlements

If you want to add inventory and resource management, use this rule. When a character gains a benefit by rolling the maximum result on a successful SD roll, they may, instead of increasing their own die one step, contribute that benefit to the group's resources.

Each contributed benefit becomes a d6 die in a communal **Resource Pool (RP)**. Instead of rolling their own SD, a player may spend one d6 from the resource pool. Success means the RP

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d6 goes back to the pool; failure means the d6 is spent and lost (there is no die step loss).

- If the RP d6 roll is a 1, roll a d4 and lose that many RP dice. If you have fewer than the total roll, you deplete the RP.
- A Survivor may spend an RP die and automatically lose it to prevent death. They suffer the effect of the failure and lose a die step but avoid death.

A group without a secure base camp can have a maximum of RP dice equal to the number of Survivors plus one. The Narrator may also reward RP dice as part of the story.

Base Operations & Expeditions: If the Survivors acquire a safe base of operations, they can store additional RP dice. A base can hold a maximum number of RP dice equal to double the number of Survivors plus four.

When leaving on an expedition, Survivors can take a maximum number of RP dice equal to the number of Survivors plus two. Any RP dice taken are immediately deducted from the base's remaining total.

If no Survivors guard the base, it must survive on its own. The Narrator sets a Danger Level (DL 1 to 4) representing the length of the expedition. The base rolls its own **Base Survival Die** to resist the challenge, determined by the stored RP dice:

- 1 to 3 RP: d4
- 4 to 7 RP: d6
- 8 or more RP: d8

If the Base Survival Die roll is greater than the DL, the base remains secure. If it equals or is less than the DL, the base is raided, suffers spoilage, or takes damage and loses 1d4 RP dice. If it rolls a 1 at any time, the base is overrun; all remaining RP dice are lost, and the location is compromised.

Consolidating Resources: In a base, you may exchange three d6 RP dice to create one d8 RP die. When a Survivor rolls an RP d8, it degrades after the roll and becomes a d6 (returning to the pool as a d6), whether the roll succeeds or fails.

- If the RP d8 rolls a 1, it triggers the catastrophic loss rule (roll a d4 and lose that many RP dice).
- An RP d8 used to avoid a Survivor's death automatically is completely lost and does not degrade into a d6.

You can take these dice outside the base, counting as one regular die against the expedition limit regardless of whether it is a d6 or d8. RP dice carry over from session to session in a multi-adventure campaign.