CRITS & TRICKS
RULE BOOK

*T*ucked into one of the darkest corners of the market in Eldris is a grimy, timeworn tavern, the Gutter's End, its crooked sign half-faded and buried beneath layers of soot. Inside, the smell of stale ale lingers and the air is filled with bellowing laughter and sharp whispers of deals too dangerous for daylight. Dim, flickering lanterns cast eerie shadows over the sticky floors, revealing fleeting glimpses of the unsavory figures lurking in the shadowed alcoves of the tavern. Mercenaries, thieves, and smugglers fill the rough wooden tables, their faces hard and watchful as they drink from chipped mugs, eying you with suspicion.

In one corner, a ragtag party sits around a rickety table, engrossed in a ruthless card game where fortunes hang in the balance. Coins, trinkets, and deeds pile up, raising the antes—the tension is palpable, with accusations of cheating sparking dangerous confrontations. Despite the ever-present threat of violence, a delicate balance of fear and respect keeps most conflicts simmering beneath the surface. Here, secrets are traded, lives gambled away, and fortunes can shift in the blink of an eye.

The players' attention snaps toward you at the grating sound of a chair dragging across the floor. You meet their stares with a steady gaze. "Deal me in."
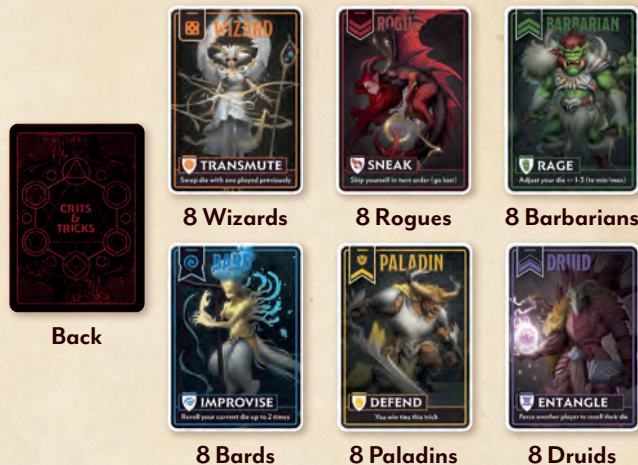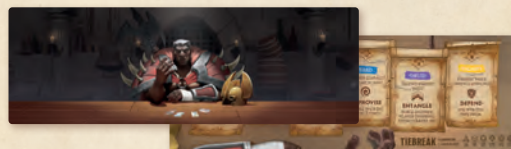
COMPONENTS

67 Loot
Coins, trinkets and treasures

8x $1 Coins   12x $3 Coins

14x $½ Coins   8x $10 Coins

1 of Each (*varied worth*)

48 Mercenary Cards in 6 Suits

WIZARD — TRANSMUTE
Swap die with one played previously

ROGUE — SNEAK
Skip yourself in turn order (go last)

BARBARIAN — RAGE
Adjust your die +/-1-3 (to minimum)

8 Wizards   8 Rogues   8 Barbarians

BARD — IMPROVISE
Reroll your current die up to 2 times

PALADIN — DEFEND
You win ties this trick

DRUID — ENTANGLE
Force another player to reroll their die

8 Bards   8 Paladins   8 Druids

Back — CRITS & TRICKS

24 Polyhedral Dice (*4 Coloured Sets*)

d4   d6   d8   d10   d12   d20

smallest → *largest*

65 Quests

UNNATURAL
Capture no Druid cards this round
$1½

4 Barkeep's Challenges

TRICKY
Win tricks equal to the value of **none** of your dice
$4

CRITS & TRICKS

4 Player Screens

Your seat at the table— get comfortable!

OVERVIEW

Welcome to the Gutter's End adventurer! Your last quest must have gone awry if you've ended up here…

Sit down and enjoy a game of Crits & Tricks! If all goes well you'll be able to trade in your meager coins for a bounty of loot as you lighten the pockets of your new "friends."

As a daring adventurer, you'll roll dice and assign them to your Mercenaries, hoping to complete your drafted Quests. Each Quest offers a prized reward, and the public Barkeep's Challenge provides an additional objective, tempting everyone with extra loot.

After 3 rounds, the adventurer with the heaviest coin purse wins! So pull up a chair, roll the dice, and remember: fortune favours the bold, whether on the battlefield or in the tavern!

*Hey newbie!
I've jotted down a few pointers for ya.
You owe me a drink!*

Playing with 1 or 2 players? *We recommend reading through the full ruleset, as the game follows the same basic structure at all player counts. You'll find special setup and tweaks for 2-player games on p.10 and solo play on p.11.*

3-4 PLAYER SETUP

① Each player selects a set of 6 coloured dice Ⓐ and a player screen Ⓑ. Position your adventurer's likeness facing outward while keeping the gameplay guide visible to you.

② Form the Mercenary Deck Ⓒ based on your player count. Return unused Mercenaries to the box.

For your first game, we recommend Wizards, Rogues, and Barbarians. (Bards will always be included.)

4 players: Select 3 Character Suits and shuffle 8 cards from each suit + 8 Bards together.

3 players: Select 3 Character Suits and shuffle 6 cards from each suit + 6 Bards together.

③ Prepare the Quest Deck Ⓓ by returning Quests to the box with suit icons (*below the title*) that do not match the suits you've chosen. All remaining Quests are shuffled to form the deck.

④ Locate the 4 Barkeep's Challenges Ⓔ, and place them near the play area.

⑤ Place all loot Ⓕ in the center of the play area to form the "pot."

③ **Examples**
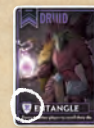
Druid Quest   *Paladin Quest*

ROUND START

The game unfolds over a series of 3 rounds. The start of each round follows this structure:

① Check Initiative

In Round 1, each player rolls a d20 🎲. The highest roll wins initiative and will lead the first "trick". If two or more players tie, they reroll until a leader emerges.

start — *a term for when each player plays one card from their hand*

In Rounds 2 and 3, the player whose loot is worth the most leads the first trick. In case of a tie, the tied players roll their d20s 🎲 for initiative.

② Summon your Strengths

- ◇ Behind their player screen, each player rolls their set of 6 dice (including the d20 🎲).
- ◇ These dice represent the strengths or attributes of your Mercenaries and will determine their effectiveness in upcoming tricks.
- ! *Dice should remain hidden from other players.* *For now…*

③ Form your party

The player to the right of the lead player is the dealer. Each player is dealt a hand of 8 Mercenaries from the Mercenary Deck.

Don't let others see your cards!

⑤ Reveal the Barkeep's Challenge

In round 1, shuffle the Barkeep's Challenge cards, and reveal one faceup in the center of the table.

In rounds 2 and 3, the player with the least loot reviews all Barkeep's Challenge cards, including any that have already been used. They select one Challenge and place it faceup in the center of the table.

> *We recommend using the "Friendly" Challenge for the entirety of your first game, rather than changing the Challenge each round.*

④ Claim your Quests

- ◇ Each player is dealt 4 Quests from the Quest Deck. Study your Quests and choose one to keep, placing it behind your screen.
- ◇ Once everyone has chosen one card, pass your remaining cards to the next player—clockwise in rounds 1 and 3, and counterclockwise in round 2. Continue choosing one card and passing until each player is passed one final card.
- ◇ Each player reviews their 4 Quests and discards one. Return all discarded Quests to the box for the remainder of the game. The 3 remaining Quests stay hidden behind your player screen.

QUESTS

◆ Each player will have 3 unique Quests available to them each round. Aim to fulfill as many as possible before the round ends.

◆ When you complete a Quest, reveal it immediately and claim the indicated loot. You may complete more than one Quest at a time, and some Quests can only be completed at the end of the round.

◆ Completed Quests are discarded from play for the remainder of the game.

CALCULATING
End the round with 2+ dice showing the same number
$2½
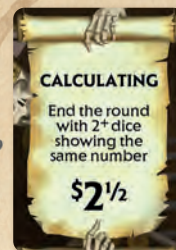
Complete a Quest? Rake in the loot!

BARKEEP'S CHALLENGE

The Barkeep's Challenges present all players with an opportunity to earn loot by winning the right number of tricks.
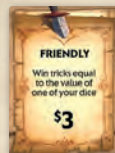
Unlike Quests, Challenges can only be fulfilled at the end of the round, and cannot be claimed during the round.

Play smart to earn bonus loot!

Tricky

Earn $4 if the number of tricks you won **does not match** the Value of any of your final dice results. *0 counts!*
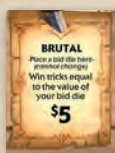
Friendly

Earn $3 if the number of tricks you won matches the Value of **any** of your final dice results.

Creative

The player who won the most tricks this round earns $2. The player who won the fewest tricks this round earns $3. If there is a tie for most and/or fewest tricks won, **the tied players do not earn any loot.**

Brutal *(Recommended only for advanced play)* *Good luck!*

◆ Once during the round, after a trick is resolved, players may place the die they just used on the Barkeep's Challenge card as their "bid die." If the total number of tricks you've won matches the Value on your bid die, earn $5.

◆ Once placed, the die is "locked in" and cannot be manipulated by any CRIT abilities.

! *A player can declare a "nil bid"* **before the round starts**, *meaning they aim to win zero tricks. If a player does not assign a die to the bid card during the round, it* **does not count** *as a nil bid.*

TRICK PLAY

Each round of the game consists of 6 tricks, where each player will play a Mercenary from their hand, and assign one of their die to the card as its Value.

Play proceeds clockwise until all players have played a Mercenary and assigned its Value.

Leading the Trick

The player who won initiative ~~leads~~ *starts* the first trick by ① playing a Mercenary from their hand. This sets the suit that all other players must follow, if they can.

The lead player ② assigns the Mercenary's Value and **may** use a CRIT ability if they wish before play passes to the next player in clockwise order.

‼ Each time a suit is led, it establishes the rule for how **that** trick will be won. Only players who followed with a card of that suit are eligible to claim victory. *See p.8 for examples*

- ◇ **Barbarian: Strength** - The player whose Barbarian has the highest Value wins.
- ◇ **Rogue: Noise** - The player whose Rogue has the lowest Value wins.
- ◇ **Wizard: Precision** - The player whose Wizard has a Value equal (*or closest*) to 5 wins.
- ◇ **Druid: Balance** - The player whose Druid has the second-highest Value wins.
- ◇ **Paladin: Honour** - The player whose Paladin has the highest Value **and** uses the same die size as the lead player's Paladin wins.
- ◇ **Bard: Versatility** - The Bard matches the winning condition of the suit it represents, see below.

Notes on Bards:

- ◇ *A Bard is **always** "wild."*
  - ◇ *When leading with a Bard, the player must declare which of the other 3 suits the Bard represents. The Bard adopts that suit for the trick, determining both how the trick is won and the suit others must play (if possible).*
  - ◇ *When played after a different suit, it is considered to be a card of the lead suit.*
- ◇ *Bards can still be played as a certain suit even if all Mercenaries from that suit have been played in earlier tricks.*

① Playing a Mercenary

- ◇ Players **must** match the suit of the lead player's Mercenary if possible.
- ◇ If the lead suit was a Bard, players must match the suit the Bard has adopted for the trick, if possible.
- ◇ Alternatively, they **may** play a Bard, as Bards are wild and **automatically** follow the lead suit.
- ◇ If a player doesn't have a card of the lead suit in their hand, they may play a card of any other suit, **but they cannot win the trick.** *called "sloughing"*

NOTE: Players are **never required** to play a Bard. This is important because (*as you'll see on p.9*) each captured Bard is worth $1 at the end of the round!

Warning: Allowing a Bard to travel with your party may result in excessive flirting, improvised musicals mid-combat, and at least one awkward moment involving a cursed lute. Proceed with caution and a sense of humor.

② Assign Mercenary Value

Once a Mercenary is played, the player must select one of the dice **from behind their screen** and assign it to the card as that Mercenary's Value. When doing so, the player has a choice. They may either Ⓐ use the current Value on the die as it was rolled during round setup or Ⓑ reroll the die and keep the new result. *You can do this every trick!*

Use a CRIT Ability (*Optional*)

In addition to playing a Mercenary on their turn, a player may reveal a card from their hand to use its CRIT ability (*see below*).

◇ Each player may use up to 2 CRIT abilities per round. Players **may** play both CRITs in the same trick if they choose.

CRIT Abilities

*CRIT abilities may be used **at any time** on a player's turn, with the exception of the Rogue.*

*You must activate the "Sneak" ability **before** playing your Mercenary.*

WIZARD

Transmute

Swap your current die with one of your previously played dice. ***Transmute may not be used on dice that have been assigned to the "Brutal" Barkeep's Challenge.***

First trick? No use!

ROGUE

Sneak

Skip your turn to become last in turn order. *If you're already last, the ability has no effect.*

BARD

Improvise

You may reroll your current die up to 2 times, but you must keep the result of your final roll.
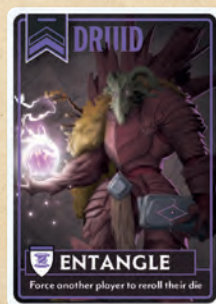
BARBARIAN

Rage

Physically increase or decrease your current die's Value by 1, 2, or 3 (*within the die's numerical limits*).

PALADIN

Defend

If your die's Value is tied for winning the trick, you win and do not move on to tiebreakers.

DRUID

Entangle

Force an opponent (*who has already resolved their turn this trick*) to reroll their die once. They must keep the new result.

NOTE: If multiple **Sneak** or **Defend** abilities are used, they resolve in the order played. The last player to use **Sneak** will act last in turn order. For **Defend**, the player who used the CRIT ability last wins the tie.

Winning the Trick

Determine the winner of the trick by the win condition of the lead suit. Only players who followed with the matching suit (*or a Bard*) are eligible to claim victory.

- ◇ **Rogue:** Lowest Value wins
- ◇ **Barbarian:** Highest Value wins
- ◇ **Wizard:** Value equal (*or closest*) to 5 wins
- ◇ **Paladin:** Highest Value **and** matches lead die size
- ◇ **Druid:** The second-highest Value wins
- ◇ **Bard:** The win condition matches that of the suit declared by the lead player

Tiebreakers

① In the case of a tie, the winner is the player who played the larger die.

② If a tie persists, the winner is the tied player who was later in turn order.

Remember, the more sides a die has, the "larger" it is!

d4	d6	d8	d10	d12	d20
△	⬡	◇	◇	⬠	⬡

smallest ——————→ largest

Examples

Rogue: Lowest Value wins.

Barbarian: Highest Value wins.

Paladin: Highest Value **and** matches lead die size.

Druid: The second-highest Value wins.

Wizard: Value equal (*or closest*) to 5 wins.

Example: The orange and purple player are both within 1 of "5." Purple wins the trick with the larger die.

Bard: The win condition matches that of the suit declared by the lead player.

Example: The lead player declares their Bard to be a Rogue, so the lowest Value will win the trick.

👑 = Winning Mercenary

↻ = Turn order (winner leads next trick)

Prepare for the next trick

The winner collects all Mercenaries played in the trick. *Mercenaries played for CRIT abilities are placed in front of their owner's screens faceup as a reminder of how many CRITs they have used this round. As these cards are no longer in your hand, they cannot be used again this round.*

4 tricks won!

① The winner will always collect cards equal to the number of players in the game, and place the Mercenaries they've collected in a facedown pile to the side of their screen.

To keep track of the total number of tricks a player has won, the cards from new tricks should be placed in an alternating direction.

② All players, including the winner, reclaim the die they used, placing it in front of their screen, **maintaining its Value.**

③ If a player has successfully completed a Quest, they reveal it and claim the specified loot immediately. The Quest is then discarded from play for the remainder of the game. *(Remember that some Quests may only be completed at the end of the round.)*

All loot is always kept in front of the players' screens. *Bragging rights!*

④ If players have dice remaining behind their screens, the round continues, and the winner of this trick leads the next one. *starts*
If it was the 6th trick, the round ends.

END OF ROUND

A round ends once the 6th trick is resolved, leaving players with no dice remaining behind their screens.

Players earn loot from the following:

① Each Bard collected during the round is worth $1. *Those used as a CRIT or in hand are worthless.*

② Quests resolved at the end-of-round payout if they were successfully completed.

③ The Barkeep's Challenge awards loot (*as indicated*) to all players who met its condition.

If this was the third round, the game ends.

If not, prepare for the next round as follows:

◇ All Quests that were in play (*completed or not*) are discarded for the remainder of the game. All Mercenaries (*in tricks, used for CRITs, or left in hand*) are shuffled to form a new deck. Prepare for the next round as described on p.4.

Items have their Value on the back side, and work the same as coins.

END OF GAME

After the third round, the game ends. The player with the most loot is the winner! *If there is a tie, play another round until someone wins.*

You came here to win—ties are for chumps!

PLAYING WITH 2

Date Night?

Setup

◇ Each player selects a set of 6 coloured dice Ⓐ and a player screen Ⓑ. Position your adventurer's likeness facing outward while keeping the gameplay guide visible to you.

◇ Form the Mercenary Deck by selecting 3 (*non-Bard*) suits and shuffling 4 cards from each suit together with 6 Bards.
For your first game we recommend: Wizard, Barbarian, Rogue.

◇ Build the Quest Deck by removing all "3+" Quests and those with suit icons that don't match the suits you selected for the game. Then, shuffle the remaining cards.

◇ Remove the "Creative" Barkeep's Challenge from play.

Quest Example
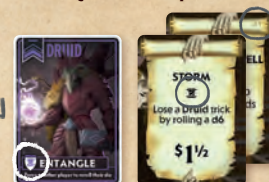
Round Start

◇ Check initiative, then summon your strengths by rolling your dice behind your screen as normal.

◇ Reveal the top 6 cards from the Quest deck faceup within sight of both players Ⓒ. *Quests will not be drafted in the 2-player game.* you've gotta fight for `em!

◇ Deal 8 Mercenary Cards to each player Ⓓ, setting the remaining 2 cards facedown and out of play—these remain unseen. *thwarting perfect knowledge for pesky card counters!*

Completing Quests

When a player completes a Quest, they immediately claim it, collect the indicated amount of loot, and discard the Quest for the remainder of the game.

If both players complete the same Quest during a trick or at the end of the round, **neither** scores it.

! *In 2-player games, tied Quests are always discarded, regardless of what the text on the Quest might say.*

At the end of the round, all unscored Quests are also discarded from the game.

Game End

The player with the most loot at the end of 3 rounds wins! If tied, play another round.

A SOLO CHALLENGE

No party? No problem

Setup

- ◇ Select a set of 6 coloured dice and a player screen. Position your adventurer's likeness facing outward while keeping the gameplay guide visible to you.
- ◇ Form a second play area with a full set of dice, and a stack of 6 faceup Bards for Drakor - your imaginary friend. *haha!*
- ◇ Form the Mercenary Deck by shuffling together 5 cards from each of the Wizard, Barbarian, and Rogue suits.
- ◇ Build the Quest Deck by removing all "3+" Quests and those with suit icons that don't match the suits you selected for the game. Then, shuffle the remaining cards, placing the deck facedown within reach.
- ◇ Set aside 1 Bard before returning unused cards to the box. **Important**: Bards collected during the round **are worth $0**.
- ◇ Leave all Barkeep's Challenges in the box.

Round Start

① Summon your strengths by rolling your dice behind your screen.

② Form your party by taking the Bard you set aside earlier and drawing the top 7 cards from the Mercenary deck. Keep the remaining cards facedown in Drakor's play area.

③ Roll an unused d6 ⬡ to set the Solo Challenge. This is the **number of tricks** you are trying to win.

④ Draw 4 Quests, select 3 to keep and discard 1 from the game.

Solo Challenge

At the end of the round, compare the number of tricks you won to the number on the Solo Challenge die:

- ◇ If they match, you earn $5.
- ◇ If they do not match, you earn $5, less $2 for each trick you are over or under. *This could result in a loss of money! But you cannot lose more money than you have.*

tell that to the tax collector!

Trick Play

Begin the round by revealing the top card from Drakor's Mercenary Deck. Assign their Mercenary's Value by rolling **all** of their unused dice, and selecting the "best" die on their behalf. "Best" is defined as the optimal die for them to win the trick—taking into account potential tiebreakers. *Continue playing by following the standard rules, except:*

- ◇ When Drakor leads, reveal the top card of their Mercenary Deck. When you lead, they always follow with a Bard.
- ◇ Each time Drakor plays a card, you will roll **all** of Drakor's **unused** dice and assign the "best" one to their Mercenary, according to the win condition of the current trick.

End Game

Win by earning $25 or more after 3 rounds! *No one will question your victory... probably!*

SOLO SCORING

$25-29 "Street Hustler"	You scraped together just enough to avoid the gutter. The shady back alleys of the tavern still call your name.
$30-34 "Coinspinner"	Your purse jingles with modest loot. You've caught the eye of a few regulars but haven't yet made your mark.
$35-39 "Savvy Gambler"	Your sharp play has lined your pockets. The tavern's best players are keeping an eye on you...
$40+ "Master of Fortune"	You've cleaned the table and earned the respect of every shifty character within earshot. Drinks are on you tonight!

3-4 PLAYER GAME REFERENCE

Round Structure

① Determine Initiative (*Leads the first trick*).
  - ◇ Round 1: Roll d20.
  - ◇ Rounds 2-3: Player whose loot is worth the most.

② Summon strengths (*Roll dice behind screen*).

③ Form Your Party (*Deal 8 Mercenaries to each player*).

④ Claim Quests (*Deal and draft 4 Quests, then discard 1*).

⑤ Barkeep's Challenge.
  - ◇ Round 1: Shuffle and draw 1.
  - ◇ Rounds 2-3: Player whose loot is worth the least chooses the Challenge.

⑥ Play 6 Tricks.

Trick Play

- ◇ The lead player sets the win condition for the trick by playing a Mercenary.
  - ◇ If leading with a Bard, they declare which suit it represents.
- ◇ When playing a Mercenary, assign its Value using a die from behind your player screen. Either maintain its Value OR reroll once, keeping the new result.
- ◇ Play proceeds clockwise.

CRIT Abilities | Use up to 2 CRITs per round

Before you play a Mercenary:
Rogue: Go last in turn order.

At any time on your turn:
Wizard: Swap your current die with one from a previous trick.
Bard: Reroll up to twice, keeping the final result.
Barbarian: Physically adjust your die's Value by +/- 1, 2, or 3.
Paladin: Win ties for Value.
Druid: Force an opponent to reroll their current die.

Winning the Trick

- ◇ Only players who followed the lead suit (*or played a Bard*) are eligible to win a trick.
- ◇ The player who best met the lead suit's win condition wins the trick (*see pages 6,8*); if tied, see below.

Tiebreakers (*in order*)

① Largest die wins.

② Latest in turn order wins.

d4	d6	d8	d10	d12	d20

smallest ————————→ largest

Completing Quests

- ◇ Reveal and discard completed Quests (*immediately after a trick, or at the end of the round*).
- ◇ Claim loot from the supply as shown on the Quest card.

Winning the Game
At the end of the third round, whose loot is worth the most wins!

CREDITS