

Playing Interplay's Dragon Dice

Introduction

Dragon Dice is a strategy game based on TSR's original tabletop game which uses dice to represent army units in a battle to take and maintain control over multiple terrains. Each die in an army (referred to as a 'unit die') has six faces. Each face of a unit die is inscribed with various icons representing the die's identity, melee, missile, magic, and maneuvering skills. Based on the rolling of groups of these unit dice, the outcomes of battles and engagements to control terrains are determined. There are also dice representing dragons. These dice have twelve sides, and can be brought into play through the casting of magic. Finally, there are terrain dice. These dice, each with eight faces, represent the terrains that the players will be fighting to control. The eight sides of a terrain die are marked with a number (1 through 8), indicating how close the battling armies are to the ultimate goal of any terrain die, the 8th Face. When an army maneuvers a terrain die to the 8th Face, it receives bonuses to its attack, defense, and maneuvering capabilities, as well as other special skills.

The goal of the game is for your armies to maneuver two terrain dice to the 8th Face. The game is won immediately when the second 8th Face is attained. Alternatively, if all of your opponent's armies are destroyed, you also win the game. As you attempt to maneuver to the 8th face of a terrain die, your opponent's armies can try to counter-manuever the die to keep you from attaining you goal. Once you have an 8th Face, however, it is not yours to keep. Your opponent can still wrest the terrain from your grasp if they can muster enough troops to maneuver the terrain back down to a lower face.

Description of Dice Representation in Interplay's Dragon Dice

In conversion of Dragon Dice to a computer game, we have the opportunity to represent the dice in a different way than TSR's original version. Unit dice and dragons can be represented as animated characters, and terrains can be represented by pictures of coastlines, mountain ranges, and swamps. In keeping with the TSR game, however, each representation that we use in our computer version of the game is still bound to it's original dice roots through a 3D die viewer available on a number of screens in the game. If a user wants to know exactly what a particular animated figure is, or what it can do, they can simply click on the figure, and the die it represents will appear in the die viewer. More information on this appears later in the document.

On the Strategy Screen (described below), characters are represented in the following way: An animated figure represents the race of the unit (Coral Elf, Dwarf, Goblin, Lave Elf), and an iconic class identifier stands next to each unit. There are five kinds of class identifiers: A large sword (Heavy), a smaller sword with an ornate handle (Light), a spear with a trident-like fork (Missile), a lance (Cavalry), and a magic staff (Magic). On the class identifier there is also a flag with a number between 1 and 3 on it indicating the point value of the unit. Using these three pieces of information and the 3D die viewer the user will be able to identify the units in their armies.

The Playing the Game

After watching the introductory movie, click the 'New' button on the static image of four dragons in a tavern. This will bring you to the Setup Screen where you can begin to organize a game of Dragon Dice.

Setup Screen



This screen is split into two major portions: The player portraits, and the information window. The player portraits reside on the left side of the setup screen, and will eventually be filled with information pertaining to the people who will be playing the game, including their chosen battle legion and name. The information window on the right side of the screen encompasses all of the menu options and various other functions that will be discussed later. Upon entering this screen, the information window has four menu options: Local, Remote, Tutorial, and Cancel.

Local: Click this option to begin a game of Dragon Dice that will take place only on this machine. This option will bring up a sub-menu asking whether the player would like a Standard, Tournament, or Campaign game. A Standard game is a straight-forward session where each player gets to formulate a battle legion of up to 300 points made up of any dice they wish that are available in the Dragon Dice world. A Tournament game

is somewhat like a tournament game of Magic: The Gathering, in that the user is given a random group of dice from which they must build their battle legion. In this case, of course, the player must make the best of whatever they have received. A Campaign game is a series of sessions that must be played in sequence. You will act as a "General" of the chosen race, fighting a group of increasingly difficult battles. The goals of these campaigns are not simply to control two 8th Faces, as is the case with the Standard game. The General may be called upon to hold a terrain at the 1st Face for five turns straight, or to defeat three dragons who are plaguing the countryside. This offers variety from the standard game.

Remote: Click this option to begin a game of Dragon Dice that will be played with another human over some form of communications device. Currently supported are IPX, TCP/IP, Modem, and Serial connection. The sub-menus are fairly self-explanatory. After creating or joining a game on a certain communications medium, game setup is nearly identical to that of a local game.

Tutorial: Although this is not fully implemented yet, the purpose is to show movies which describe the usage of various screens throughout the game.

After choosing to begin a game (I'll use a local standard game as an example), you will be presented with some changes to the player portraits and information screen. You will notice that the top two player portraits are now filled with default human players. You can change the names of these players by editing the "Human #" line beneath the portraits. Using the left and right arrows adjacent to each of the portraits, you can modify the player's race. This will not particularly affect the game except to alter the bitmap used to represent the dice rolling arm during combat (more on this later). Using the arrows, you can also change a player portrait to an AI player. All AI players will display a small computer icon next to the portrait. Finally, if a slot is going to be empty, use the arrows to fill the portrait with the picture of cobwebs and the word "None". Set up the game to your liking with local and AI players. Now you are ready to create a battle legion. Next to each portrait is a gold symbol which looks like a compass and square. This is the Guild Hall symbol. Clicking this symbol will take you to the Guild Hall where you can build a battle legion for that player. Read the section "Guild Hall" for information on how to do this.

The information window will now look different as well. You will see what looks like a list of names and numbers. This list is composed of pre-built battle legions which are available for use. If you wish to use a pre-built battle legion rather than build your own, click and drag one of the battle legions onto the portrait of the player to whom you wish to assign the battle legion. The name and size of the battle legion will appear next to the player portrait. After dragging the army, you can then see what is in the battle legion by clicking on the Guild Hall symbol. You may then edit the battle legion if you wish.

When you are finished choosing a battle legion for each player you are ready to begin the game. Please note, AI players will formulate their own battle legions based on their own personalities if you do not choose one for them. In order to begin the game, click on the Crossed Axe icon underneath the information window.

Guild Hall



The Guild Hall is used to create, modify, save, and load battle legions. The screen consists of four parts: The Race Selector, the Die Pool, the Battle Legion area, and the Information area. The Race Selector lies across the top of the screen. It is a series of buttons which indicate different kinds of dice, including all of the standard races, terrains, dragons, and groups of “Kicker Packs” which are add-on packs of dice that may eventually be added to our version of Dragon Dice at a future date. By clicking on one of the buttons in the Race Selector you will change the dice that appear in the Die Pool on the left side of the screen. In the above figure, you can see that the Coral Elf button in the Race Selector is highlighted, and so the Die Pool on the left displays all of the Coral Elves available in the game.

The Battle Legion area consists of the three list boxes in the middle of the screen and the three slots in the upper-right side of the screen. The list boxes in the middle represent the three main components of any battle legion, the Home army, the Horde army, and the Campaign army. These three armies will be placed around the playing field when the game is begun, giving you a presence on a number of terrains at the start of the game. The three slots in the upper-right will hold, from top to bottom, the Home Terrain, the Frontier Candidate, and the dragon(s) brought into the game by the battle legion. Finally, there is the Information area in the lower-right portion of the screen. This area contains buttons for loading and saving battle legions, as well as returning to

the Setup Screen. Immediately below the buttons is a small text area. When a die is highlighted in the Die Pool, information about that die appears in this area. In addition, when a die is dragged into one of the Battle Legion list boxes, this area will display a breakdown of the percentage of units in the Home, Horde, and Campaign. This reason for this is described below. The bottom region is the 3D die viewer. When a die is highlighted in the Die Pool, a 3D representation of the die appears in this area. By using the mouse, you can click and drag the 3D die around in the viewer to see what kinds of icons are available on the faces of the die. This helps in deciding what dice to include in the battle legion.

To build a Battle Legion, drag and drop unit dice from the Die Pool into the middle list boxes. The unit dice you should be using are from the first four buttons in the Race Selector: Coral Elves, Dwarves, Goblins, and Lava Elves. After filling the army boxes, we need to choose a Home Terrain and a Frontier Candidate. By clicking on the Terrain button in the Race Selector (the one with the rocky looking cave next to the dragons), you will see all of the terrains available in the Die Pool.

Every player in the game will choose a Home Terrain for their battle legion. The Home Terrain is where the Home Army will begin the game. This terrain will generally be one that will positively benefit the Home Army according to the rules set out in the TSR version of Dragon Dice. For instance, Goblins double their maneuver results on Swampland, so if you have a mostly Goblin home army, you will probably want a Swampland for your home terrain. Drag and drop a terrain into the Home Terrain box.

Each player will also choose a Frontier Candidate for their battle legion. The Frontier Candidate is different from the Home Terrain in that it is not guaranteed to be used in the game. When the game begins, a roll is made to determine who goes first. Whoever goes first will also have their Frontier Candidate used in the game. All of the other players' Candidates will be thrown out. Drag and drop a terrain into the Frontier Candidate box.

Finally, there is the Dragon box. Each battle legion will be able to bring in at least one dragon into the game, depending on the size of the game that will be played. Click on the Dragon in the Race Selector to show all available dragons in the Die Pool. Drag and drop a dragon into the Dragon box.

Once your battle legion is built, click the Setup button (this may appear as a U-turn arrow in the version you see) to return to the Setup Screen. You will be asked if you want to save the battle legion.

Campaign Screen



After clicking on the Crossed Axe icon on the Setup Screen, the game will begin. The Horde armies of all players will be rolled to determine who goes first, and the Frontier Candidate of the winner of the roll will automatically be used as the frontier. Each player's Home Army will automatically be placed on their Home terrain. If a game of three or more players is being played, everyone must place their Horde and Campaign armies. In the figure above, all players except Human 3 have placed their armies already. Human 3 must drag and drop the flag in the lower right portion of the screen to one of the terrains having the red and white bullseye icon next to them. In this case, Human 3 could place the Horde army on the Northwest or Northeast terrain. After doing this, the player will be asked to place his/her Campaign army on another terrain with a bullseye icon. All players will be asked to do this in sequence, and when all armies are placed a dialog box will pop up indicating whose turn it is.

By running the mouse over the campaign screen you will see that various pieces of the map become highlighted. Click on any of the highlighted areas to travel to that location. When it is your turn, you will want to click on one of the terrains on which one of your armies resides. The color of your army flags is indicated at the bottom of the screen next to your player name.

Strategy Screen



After clicking on a terrain on the Campaign screen, You will be taken to a screen like the one in the figure above. This is the Strategy Screen, and it is where most of the game will take place.

This screen is broken up into many different sections. The right side of the screen is taken up with a visual representation of the battlefield of the current terrain. The acting player's units are always displayed on the left hand side, while opponents are on the right side. Above the right half of the visual battlefield representation are a number of tabs with flags inside them. These Flag Tabs indicate the various opponent armies. In the figure above, the current player (who's flag is red), has two opponent armies on the current terrain (blue and violet). By clicking on the flag of your choice, you will see all of the dice in that opponent's army. These Flag Tabs are used to choose targets when attacking.

The portion of the most significance on this screen is the Strategy Panel on the left side of the screen. The panel contains many controls used to issue commands to your armies as well as to traverse the land. In the upper-left, there is a multi-purpose information window. The tabs across the top of the window activate the different information functions. (Note: The icons shown in the figure above are in the wrong order. This will be fixed.) From left to right, the functions are Turn Sequence Description, 3D Die Viewer, Spell Description, and Roll Results. The Turn Sequence Description indicates what part of the turn the current player is on and what the player should do next. When your turn begins, the sequence description will be as shown

above: “1st March/Maneuver or Attack”. Consult the official TSR rules for Dragon Dice for more information on the details of turn sequence.

The 3D die viewer works in the same way as the one on the Guild Hall screen. Clicking on one of the animated characters will display the die that the character represents in the Die Viewer. This die can be consulted to determine which units are most expendable when an attack forces you to lose points from your army.

The Spell Description tab will allow you to see a textual description of a spell that has been cast on a unit, army, or terrain. When a spell icon is on the Strategy Screen, simply click on the icon, and its description will appear in the information window.

Finally, the Roll Results tab will display a small listbox indicating the complete results of the last attack roll of an army. For instance, if you skirmish attack another army, both the attacking and defending army’s roll results will appear in the window.

Immediately below the information window is the Mini Campaign Screen. This miniature version of the Campaign Screen has all of the same active hotspots as its larger cousin, but is placed on the Strategy Screen to allow for easy transportation between terrains, Graveyard/Reserves, and the Dragon Cave. You can also return to the Campaign Screen itself by clicking on the mini-campaign screen when the mouse is not highlighting a hotspot.

Below the mini-campaign screen is a horizontal strip for the Terrain Face information. At the beginning of the game, every terrain is rolled to a random face to start with. Displayed in the Terrain Face box are three faces. The face displayed in the middle box is the face that the currently selected terrain is on. The one to the left is the terrain face immediately before the current face, and the one to the right is the face immediately after the current face. This information can be used to determine whether it is strategically better to maneuver the terrain up, down, or stay where it is.

Beneath the Terrain Face box, is a series of six buttons representing all of the possible actions during a turn. Any actions which are not available to an army at any particular point in time will be grayed out. From left to right across the first row is Maneuver, Skirmish, and Charge. Left to right across the second row is Missile, Magic, and Skip March. Maneuver allows your army to attempt to move the face of the current terrain up or down by one step. This will help you attain the 8th Face of the terrain. Any opponent armies at the terrain you are trying to maneuver will be asked if they wish to counter-maneuver. Whichever army rolls the move maneuver results will win the roll. If the maneuvering army wins, the player will be asked to choose a new face for the terrain. To choose a new face, click the Terrain Face to either the left or right of the current face in the Terrain Face box.

Skirmish and Charge are two methods of melee attack. When you choose either of these options, you will need to select a target. All viable targets will have a bullseye next to their Flag Tab (the tabs described above). Make sure the army you wish to attack is displayed in the right half of the battlefield by clicking on its Flag Tab. When you have chosen your target, click the Skirmish or Charge button a second time to perform the attack. Consult the official TSR Dragon Dice rules for more information on the details of Skirmishing and Charging.

Missile attacking is similar to Skirmish and Charge, except that legal targets can be on adjacent terrains, not just on the current terrain. Any terrain which has legal missile targets on it will have a bullseye next to it on both the Campaign screen and the

mini-campaign screen. Travel to the terrain holding the army you wish to attack, and then choose the specific target army in the same manner as described for Skirmish and Charge. After choosing the target, click on the Missile attack button a second time to perform the attack.

Magic is quite different from the other forms of attack since you do not have to specify a target when you roll for magic. The magic roll is simply used to determine how many points of magic you will have for casting spells. Any targets will have to be chosen depending on the spells you wish to cast. When you choose to cast Magic, you will be taken to the Magic Screen where you will determine the spells your army will cast. Please read the “Magic Screen” section for more information.

The Skip March button is used in two ways. First, if you have not chosen to maneuver or attack, this button will skip the current march and either move on to the second march, or to the Reinforce phase, depending on where you are in the turn sequence. Second, if you have chosen a mode of attack like Missile or Skirmish and are being asked to choose a target, this button will abort the attack request and allow you to choose another instead.

After selecting an attack, you will need to roll the dice in your army to determine results. When the choice has been made, an animated arm will enter the screen and scoop up the army units. The hand will begin shaking the dice. To release the dice, click the left mouse button. After the rolls are completed, the results of the battle will be displayed.

After performing an attack and allowing the game to calculate the results, a player may need to take some damage. A picture of a soldier in a grave will appear in the bottom-left corner of the Strategy Screen when this occurs. Two numbers appear on this picture. The first is the number of points of damage that must be removed from the army, the second is the number of points that have been allocated for removal. As you choose units to kill, the second number will grow. When the number of points allocated for removal is equal to the number of damage points, or when the player cannot legally take any more damage because of the makeup of their army, a button marked “DONE” will appear in the picture. Click the “DONE” button to continue with the game. Dead units are transported to the player’s Graveyard. They are not completely out of the game, however, since various magic spells have the ability to resurrect dead units. Dead units may be eradicated, and hence removed from play, by either specific magic spells or by being buried for Black magic doubling (see Magic Screen section).

After the second march is completed, the user will be able to perform Reserve Movements. This is the process of retreating units from terrains into the player’s reserve area, as well as reinforcing terrains with units from the reserve area. The player may first reinforce units. The right side of the battlefield will automatically change to the player’s reserve area. To move units from reserves to a terrain, first select the terrain to which you wish to move units. Click on the units in the reserve area you wish to move to the terrain, and when you are ready, click the unit transfer button in the lower-left area of the Strategy Screen. This is the button with the R pointing towards a terrain. You can perform this reinforcement to as many terrains as you wish, and you can remove as many units as you wish from your reserves. Click the “DONE” button in the lower-left corner of the screen when you are finished reinforcing.

At this point, the player may have as many of their units as they wish Retreat from any terrains they wish. This process is the same as the above description for reinforcement except the user clicks on units residing on terrains to transport to the reserve area. When the units you wish to move to reserves are selected, click the unit transfer button in the lower-left area of the Strategy Screen. This is the button with the terrain pointing towards the R. When you are done retreating units, click the “DONE” button in the lower-left corner of the Strategy Screen.

Following reserve movements, the current player’s turn is complete. A dialog box will be displayed indicating which player’s turn is next.

Magic Screen



The Magic Screen is where a player who has just cast magic will divide up their spell points and choose spells to cast. This screen is displayed automatically when a player successfully rolls magic points. It is split into three sections: the Allocation Area, the Black Magic Doubler, and the Spell Selector.

The user will begin working with magic in the Allocation Area. Dragon Dice’s magic spells are split up into five colors, all of which are listed at the bottom of the figure shown. Each of the races of dice in the game is made up of two different colors. These colors indicate the colors of magic that are available to that race for casting. For example, the Coral Elves are green and blue, so they can naturally cast blue and green spells. Because each unit can cast two colors of magic, you must decide which colors of

magic any particular race is going to cast. For instance, if the player gets 4 points of Coral Elf magic they can cast the following combinations: 4 points of Blue, 3 points of Blue (1 point unused because there are no 1 point spells), 2 points of Blue and 2 points of Green, 3 points of Green (1 point unused), and 4 points of Green. Because of this range of decisions, you must use the scroll bars shown above to delineate how many points of each race's magic is being allocated to which spell color. Sliding the thumb slider back and forth between the two colors changes the numbers in the boxes above the scroll bar indicating the exact number of points of each color the user wants. Once you have finished allocating points, click the "DONE" button in the lower-right corner of the Allocation Area.

The middle section of the Magic Screen will highlight if the user has the ability to double Black magic. According to the rules of Dragon Dice, if a user wants to cast Black they may be able to double the number of points they have access to. This is done by burying units from another player's Graveyard. In this area, the casting player will be told how many points of dead units are available to bury for each player. If the caster wishes to bury dead units, they will choose how many points from each player, and then the player who's units are being buried will be asked to choose which units to bury.

The bottom section of the Magic Screen is the Spell Selection area. After deciding the number of points of magic you wanted in the Allocation Area, number boxes were placed next to all of the spells you are capable of casting. Using the arrows next to the boxes, you can increase or decrease the number of each spell you wish to cast. As you do this, spell you don't have enough points to cast anymore will no longer have number boxes next to them. To the left of the spell names is an area that will display a textual description of what the spell does when a spell is clicked. It also shows the icon used to represent that spell. In order to determine which spells you wish to cast, you may want to look around the terrains to see who is ripe for targeting. The button in the lower-right portion of this screen with the terrain graphics in it will take you back to the Campaign screen where you can then traverse the terrains to determine what spells would most benefit you. To return to the Magic Screen, go to the Campaign Screen and click on the Spell Tower (the tower with the small flag on top). When you are done choosing your spells click the "DONE" button in the Spell Selection area. If you realize you need to re-allocate your magic points, click the "RESET" button and the Allocation Area will reactivate, allowing you to change your color allocation.

When you are finished determining spells to cast, you must then target the spells at specific units, armies, or terrains. You will be returned to the Strategy Screen, where all of the spells you cast will be listed in the lower-left corner of the screen. To target a spell, click on the it, and all legal targets will display a bullseye next to them. Drag and drop the spell onto the target. Dragon summoning is slightly different since you must take the dragon from either the Dragon Cave or a terrain. Click on the Dragon Summoning spell, and then return to the Campaign Screen. All terrains (and the Dragon Cave) which have castable Dragons on them will have a dragon icon next to them. To summon a dragon to a terrain, drag and drop one of the available dragons to the desired terrain. When all spells have been targeted, click the "DONE" button in the lower-left corner of the Strategy Screen.

Quitting the Game

To end a game of Dragon Dice, click on the File menu, and choose one of the available options. New Game will return you to the Setup Screen here you may start a new game. Quit Game will return you to the title screen. Exit will close Dragon Dice.