

LETTER DELVE

By Lisa Smedman, with Kyle Taylor-Smedman

Letter Delve uses the components of *Scrabble* and adds rules inspired by the 1980 video game *Rogue*, which used ASCII characters to create a procedurally generated (random) world. Monsters, in *Rogue*, were represented by capital letters – 26 monsters, one for each letter of the alphabet.

In *Letter Delve*, 2-4 players enter a dungeon, fight monsters, and compete to amass as much treasure as possible. The winner is the one to escape with the most coins.

Components

100 Scrabble tiles

Scrabble board

4 pawns of different colors

D3, D4, D6, D8, D10, D12, D30

30 counters, small enough to fit on board spaces

The Board

The STAR space at center of board is where players enter and exit the dungeon.

The 16 PINK spaces are walls that block movement (except for flying monsters).

The 12 DARK BLUE spaces are collection points where magic items can be collected.

The 22 LIGHT BLUE spaces are where monsters spawn.

The 8 RED spaces are treasure chests filled with coins.

Setup

Central Monsters

1. Take the Q, Z, J and X tiles. These are the “boss monsters.” Place them all face down, and “shuffle” them. Place one of these tiles on each of the four LIGHT BLUE central monster spawn points, keeping them face down.

Outer Monsters

1. Place all of the other tiles face down, and randomly select 20 tiles. Place one on each of the other monster spawn points (LIGHT BLUE spaces), keeping them face down.

All monsters begin the game sleeping (face down).

Player Characters

Each player is a player character (pawn) who has entered the dungeon to collect loot. At the start of the game, the player has 20 hit points. If the player is ever reduced to zero hit points, they die and are out of the game. (“Permadeath” was a hallmark of the *Rogue* game.)

Each player begins the game with 20 coins to spend. They may buy a weapon and armor, if they wish – or may take the free weapon, the dagger, saving their coins. Any coins not spent count toward their total score, at the end of the game.

Record the player’s starting equipment on their character sheet.

Note: the Roll d4 column is used if a weapon is polymorphed.

Weapons	Cost	Dice	roll D4
Dagger	free	D4	1
Mace	5 coins	D6	2
Sword	10 coins	D8	3
Two-Handed Sword	15 coins	D10	4
Leather Armor	10 coins	soaks 1 st hit of damage/battle	

Leather Armor

Players equipped with Leather Armor ignore the first point of damage inflicted upon them in each battle.

Upgrading Gear

At the beginning of any of their turns, a player may upgrade their weapon by spending 5 coins per tier of improvement (eg: upgrading from a dagger to a sword would cost 10 coins; upgrading from a sword to a two-handed sword would cost 5 coins). Players may also purchase Leather Armor for 10 coins at the beginning of any of their turns.

Turns

The game alternates turns, with each player taking a turn, then the monsters taking their turn. Monsters must be awake (face up) to move or attack. Sleeping (face down) monsters do not take a turn.



Player Movement

Players enter and exit the dungeon from the spiral staircase (STAR space) at the center of the board. On each player's first turn of the game, the player places their pawn on the STAR space, then must move off this space. (After this first turn, the player may, if desired, remain in place and not move during their turn.)

On their turn, the player rolls 2D4 and moves their pawn up to this many spaces. Movement must be orthogonal; diagonal movement is not permitted.

If a player ends their movement on one of the four central collection points (DARK BLUE spaces nearest the STAR) the player collects 2 items. If a player ends their movement on any other collection point (DARK BLUE space) the player collects 1 item.

If the player ends their movement on a treasure chest (RED space) the player collects 2D10 coins.

Collecting items and treasure may wake one or more monsters.

Players may leave the dungeon at any point by ending their movement on the STAR space. The player is then out of the game and may not re-enter the dungeon. (Players may pass over the STAR space without exiting, as long as they don't end a turn there.)

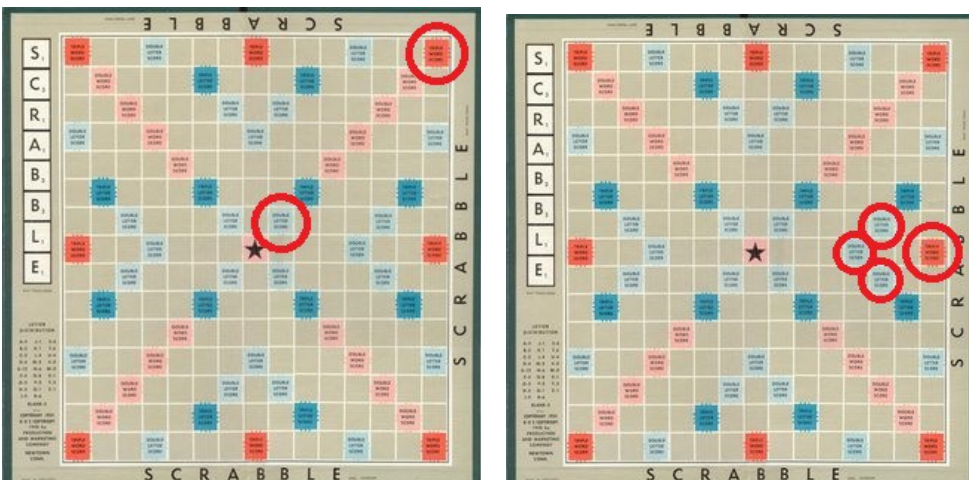
Treasure Chests & Coins

When a player ends their turn on a treasure chest (RED spaces) they can loot the coins it holds. The player rolls 2D10 and adds that many coins to their total.

Each treasure chest can only be looted once. After a player loots a chest, place a token on the space, to indicate that the chest is empty.

Looting a corner chest awakens the boss monster at the far end of the diagonal wall (PINK spaces) that leads from the treasure chest space towards the monster spawn space. Looting a side chest awakens the three monsters closest to the chest. At the end of the turn of the player who looted the chest, turn these monsters face up. (If no monsters are on these spaces, nothing happens.)

Once a monster is awake (face up) it begins taking turns.



Magic Items

When a player ends their movement on a collection point (DARK BLUE space) they receive a magic item (2 magic items, if it is one of the four DARK BLUE spaces closest to the STAR). The player rolls a D30, and immediately receives the corresponding magic item(s).

Collecting from a space adjacent to a monster (diagonally) wakens that monster.

Each collection point can only be activated once. After a player receives a magic item, place a token on the space, to indicate that it is empty.

Magic items can be used at any point in the game (on the player's turn, on another player's turn, or on the monster turn), including the turn on which they were collected. They may also be saved for use on a future turn. All items can only be used ONCE and should be crossed off the player's character sheet once used.

Magic Items (d30)

1	Conjure Coins	Player gains 2D3 coins
2	Mystic Armor	Soaks up 1 st and 2 nd hits inflicted on wearer during one battle (stacks with Leather Armor)
3	Snipe	Player can make 1 attack from 2 spaces away
4	Waken	Turn 1 sleeping monster face up
5	Sleep	Turn 1 monster face down; it loses its next turn, then awakes
6	Freeze	1 monster can't move during next monster turn
7	Teleport	Player can move to any space on the board (not including walls)
8	Enchant Weapon	Roll 2 dice for weapon for entire battle, choose highest roll
9	Create Monster	Place a randomly drawn, non-boss monster adjacent to you
10	Polymorph Weapon	Exchange 1 weapon for a randomly rolled weapon
11	Enchant Armor	Soaks up 1 st hit inflicted on wearer during one battle (stacks with Leather Armor)

12	Forced Move	Chosen monster moves D8 spaces in direction of player's choice
13	Poison	First hit done by player kills the monster (non-boss only)
14	Heal	Player regains D4 HP (total HP can't exceed 20)
15	Extra Healing	Player regains D8 HP (total HP can't exceed 20)
16	Full Healing	Player is restored to full HP
17	Haste	Player rolls and moves twice
18	Levitation	Player can pass over walls
19	Strength	Player adds D4 to attack rolls for entire battle
20	Find Secret Door	Player can pass through a wall
21	Confusion	Monster rolls 2 dice to attack, takes worst result for entire battle
22	Regeneration	Player heals 1 HP / turn until at full health
23	Invisibility	For one turn, player is invisible; monsters ignore player
24	Polymorph	Exchange monster with a randomly drawn monster
25	Magic Missiles	Inflict D4 damage on a monster before a battle begins
26	Slow Monster	Monster moves at half speed (D4) for one turn
27	Drain Life	Each hit on monster restores 1HP to player (total HP can't exceed 20)
28	Teleport Monster	Move monster to any unoccupied space on board
29	Cancellation	For one turn, cancel a monster's special ability
30	Bless Weapon	+1 to player's die rolls for one battle

Waking Monsters

At the start of the game all monsters are asleep (face down) on their spawn points. Only monsters that are awake (face up) activate during the monsters' turn.

Monsters can be awakened two different ways:

- When a treasure chest is looted.
 - Looting a corner chest awakens the monster at the far end of the diagonal wall (PINK spaces) that leads from the treasure chest space towards the monster spawn space.
 - Looting a side chest awakens the three monsters closest to the chest.
- When a player moves adjacent to a monster (horizontally, vertically, or diagonally). The player continues any remaining movement, but as they pass by the monster, it is turned face up. Note that it is possible to wake more than one monster this way.

Moving past a boss monster on the player's first turn of the game does NOT wake that monster.

Monster Movement

During the monster turn, each face up monster activates, starting with the face up monster with the highest hit points (the number on the tile) to lowest hit points. Monsters that have 10 HP activate first, then monsters that are 8 HP, and so on. Dopplegangers (blank tiles) activate last. If there is a tie, the tie is broken by the tied monsters going in alphabetical order. If there is still a tie, determine which monster activates first randomly.

When it activates, each monster rolls D8 and moves that many spaces towards the nearest player, by the most direct route possible. Movement is orthogonal only (no diagonal movement).

Monster movement is blocked by walls, unless the monster can fly. Flying monsters pass over walls as if they aren't there.

When determining which player is closest to the monster, count around obstacles (walls). Thus, a player who is only two spaces away, but on the other side of a wall, is "father" from the monster than a character who is three or more spaces away, with no wall in between to impede the monster's movement.

Should its movement bring a monster to any of the eight spaces adjacent to a player, the monster immediately attacks. This battle must be concluded before the next monster activates.

If the monster ends its movement adjacent to two or more players, randomize which one it attacks.

Monster Properties

Monsters have hit points equal to the number on the tile. Boss Monsters (Q, Z) have 10 hit points, for example, while Emus (E) have just 1 hit point.

Each time a player lands a hit on a monster, it loses 1 hit point. Any monster reduced to zero hit points is dead, and is removed from the board.

When attacking, monsters roll an attack die determined by the number on their tile. Monsters with a 1 roll a D3. Monsters with a 2 roll a D4. Monsters with a 3 roll a D6. Monsters with a 4 roll a D8. Monsters with a 5 roll a D10. Monsters with an 8 roll a D12. Monsters with a 10 roll a D20.

Some monsters have special properties:

- **Fly** = Can pass over or land on walls (PINK spaces) as if they weren't there.
- **Greedy** = In addition to inflicting damage, this monster steals D4 coins per hit inflicted.
- **Regeneration** = When this monster dies, place it face down on any unoccupied spawn point (LIGHT BLUE space).
- **Mean** = This monster ignores all armor, including magical armor.
- **Invisible** = When determining the closest player to move towards, this monster first counts the distance between its current position and the nearest player, then counts to see if an unoccupied spawn point (LIGHT BLUE space) is closer to a player. If the latter is closer, the monster jumps to the unoccupied monster spawn point, then rolls for movement and moves.
- **Doppleganger** = Blank tiles are dopplegangers. They have 5 hit points, and attack using the same weapon as the player they are attacking.

Combat

Monsters move, one by one, and then enter into a battle if they are adjacent to a player.

A battle lasts until either the monster dies (reduced to zero hit points) or until the player it is attacking dies.

During the battle, the player rolls an attack die based on their weapon, while the monster rolls its attack die. These paired rolls continue, over and over, until the battle is done.

On each of the rolls, there are two possible results:

- If the player rolls higher, or if the rolls are tied, the monster loses 1 hit point.
- If the monster rolls higher, the player loses 1 hit point.

If a player is wearing Leather Armor, the armor automatically soaks up the first point of damage the player takes during the battle. The armor does not soak up any damage after that. Armor conveyed by a magical item stacks on top of this.

Magic items may be used at any point during the combat.

If the monster dies, it drops a number of coins equal to twice the number on its tile. (Dopplegangers do not drop coins.) The player who defeated the monster immediately gets these coins.

Should a combat end without either the player or monster being defeated (for example, if using a magic item ends the combat) the player retains all damage taken – but the monster remains at full hit points. Damage done to monsters does not carry over from one battle to the next; the monster always starts each battle at full hit points.

Player vs Player Combat

A player who moves adjacent to another player may immediately initiate combat with them. As with monster battles, the battle continues until one player is slain (or until either player uses a magic item that ends the combat).

A player who kills another player immediately gets their coins, as well as any magic items the defeated player was carrying.

Ending the Game

The game ends when the last player has exited the dungeon, or when the last monster has been killed, whichever comes first.

Monster Hit Points

- 10 = Q, Z
- 8 = J, X
- 5 = K
- 4 = F, H, V, W, Y
- 3 = B, C, M, P
- 2 = D, G
- 1 = A, E, I, L, N, O, R, S, T, U
- Blank (Doppleganger)

Attack Die

D20 = Boss
D12 = Mini-Boss
D10
D8
D6
D4
D3
identical to player's weapon

Number of Tiles in a Scrabble Game

12 x E

9 x A, I

8 x O

6 x N, R, T

4 x D, L, S, U

3 x G

2 x B, C, F, H, M, P, V, Y, W, blank

1 x J, K, Q, X, Z

	HP	Dice	Loot	Fly	Greedy	Regeneration	Mean	Invisible
Aquator	1	D3	2					
Bat	3	D6	6	x				
Centaur	3	D6	6				x	
Dragonette	2	D4	4		x			
Emu	1	D3	2					
Flytrap	4	D8	8				x	
Griffin	2	D4	4	x				
Hobgoblin	4	D8	8				x	
Ice Monster	1	D3	2					
Jabberwock	8	D12	16		x			
Kestrel	5	D10	10	x				
Leprechaun	1	D3	2		x			
Medusa	3	D6	6		x			
Nymph	1	D3	2					
Orc	1	D3	2		x			
Phantom	3	D6	6					x
Quagga	10	D20	20				x	
Rattlesnake	1	D3	2					
Snake	1	D3	2					
Troll	1	D3	2			x		
Ur-vile	1	D3	2					
Vampire	4	D6	8			x		
Wraith	4	D8	8					x
Xeroc	8	D12	16	x				
Yeti	4	D8	8				x	
Zombie Lord	10	D20	20					x
BLANK (mimic)	5	player's best weapon	0					

[illegible]