

Little Donjons



Make Heroes. Roll Dice. Tell Stories!

For Dan Anderson

Hey Dan,

This is a prototype of **Little Donjons**. Your game.

You built something genuinely lovely here. The design is elegant — simple enough for a six-year-old, deep enough to grow with the players, and human enough that it actually respects the kids sitting at the table. The way the game handles failure as *'something new happens'* instead of *'you were wrong'* is the kind of design insight that experienced game designers spend years learning.

I know you're nervous about putting it out into the world. That's fair. But I want you to hold this in your hands for a second and notice what it actually is: a complete, playable, thoughtful game. It works. The mechanics are clean. The sample adventure is immediately runnable. The characters are charming. The tone is exactly right.

This prototype includes:

- The full rulebook — made from your words
- The Sunny Bell Adventure — a complete 45-minute session you can run tonight
- Character sheets — two per page, ready to fill out

You don't have to sell anything right now. Just play it. Run it for some kids and watch what happens when they decide the goat blocking the road is the most important character in the whole adventure.

That moment? That's your game working perfectly.

With enormous respect for what you made,

Thomas

Little Donjons v0.1 — game design by Dan Anderson

Little Donjons



Rulebook

What Is Little Donjons?

Little Donjons is a **make-believe adventure game** where one player — the **Dungeon Master (DM)** — describes the world, and everyone else plays brave heroes exploring it. You roll dice to find out what happens when things get tricky.

There are no boards, no wrong moves, and no one gets eliminated. Every adventure is a story *you* make together.

AT A GLANCE

- ★ 2 or more players (best with 2–5)
- ★ One player is the Dungeon Master
- ★ Each session takes 45–60 minutes
- ★ No reading or writing required for younger players

Making Your Hero

Each player (except the DM) makes one hero. It only takes a few minutes!

STEP 1: Pick Your Class and Race

Your **class** is what you do best. Talk with the DM and players:

- *What do you do best on adventures?*
- *Where did you learn that, and from whom?*

Your **race** is what kind of being you are. If you're human, skip the race box.

Non-human? Tell the DM what makes your race special and what challenges they face in the world.

Put a **1** next to Class and Race — or **2 and 0** if you chose to be human (humans are extra good at their jobs!).

STEP 2: Pick Your Gear

Every hero starts with **four items**. Name each one and put a **1** next to it:

- A WEAPON — how do you fight or defend yourself?
- ARMOR — what keeps you safe?
- A SPELL — one magical trick you know.
- A SPECIAL ITEM or FRIEND — something unique to you!

STEP 3: Pick Your Name, Look, and Motivation

Give your hero a **name** and a few memorable details about how they look.

Most important: **Motivation**. Why are you adventuring? Talk it over with the DM — knowing your motivation helps them make adventures you actually want to be in!

MOTIVATION IDEAS

- Save the world • Protect the family farm • Seek fortune • Find fame in songs • Win glory • Discover secret knowledge • Impress someone special • Just love the thrill
- ...or invent your own!

Playing the Game

Every session follows the same four steps:

**STEP
0**

GET AN ADVENTURE

The DM thinks up a problem the world needs heroes to fix. Connect it to each character's motivation.

**STEP
1**

TRAVEL TO THE ADVENTURE

Getting there can be a challenge! One or two problems on the road. Players describe how they deal with each one, then roll dice.

STEP 2

CHALLENGE THE ADVENTURE

More problems await — two to four, plus one per character. The Donjon Level adds extra dice to the DM's rolls as heroes grow stronger.

STEP 3

RETURN TO TOWN

Count your Treasures, go up a level, and plan the next adventure!

Rolling the Dice

When a problem comes up, the DM decides how **Difficult** it is:

Easy	DM rolls 1 die	Like climbing a low fence
Hard	DM rolls 3 dice	Like crossing a rushing river
Really Hard	DM rolls 6 dice	Like sneaking past a sleeping dragon

Players roll dice equal to their class + race + any matching gear.

Easier than Easy? Players just succeed — no roll. Impossible? Find another way — no roll allowed.

Comparing Results

Look at the **highest die** on each side. Higher side wins, scoring **one point per die that beats the opponent's highest**. Tied tops? Set them aside and compare again. Complete tie? DM invents a complication.

Each winning point buys one:

- **+1 die** on a connected future roll
- **Make up one fact** about what happened

The **losing side** tells the story of what went wrong, including any facts the winning side paid for. A hero can only be eliminated if their own player agrees.

IMPORTANT RULES

Working Together: Roll for the best (or worst) hero — DM's choice — and add +1 die for each helper.

Donjon Levels: During the adventure, add extra dice equal to the Donjon Level of each problem. Level 1 = +1 die.

Back at Town: Levelling Up

Every defeated problem earns **Treasures** equal to its Donjon Level. Check the chart:

Treasures	Level
0	1
5	2
15	3
30	4
50	5
75	6
105	7
140	8
180	9
225	10
275	★ WIN!

Every time you **level up**:

- Add **+1** to a weapon, armor, spell, or item — or add a **new one**. Tell where you found it!

At levels **3, 5, 7, and 9**:

- Add **+1** to your class or race — or add a **new one**. Describe how you've grown.

Reach **275 Treasures** and you win! Tell how you saved the world — your hero retires as founder of a new town.

Ready-Made Heroes

Grab one of these heroes to start playing right away!

Goro

Dinosaur 1 · Warrior 1

Claws 1 · Scales 1 · Mighty Roar 1 · Friendly Hat 1

A person-sized raptor with green scales. He wears his friendly hat so people won't be scared. Goro tries to make peace before fighting.

Frieda

Human 0 · Good Witch 2

Zapping Wand 1 · Magic Bubble 1 · Change Shape 1 · Magic Cat 'Meowser' 1

A clever young witch traveling with her mischievous cat Meowser, looking for puzzles to solve.

Vanna

Fairy 1 · Princess 1

Pixie Bow 1 · Quick Flying 1 · Invisibility 1 · Pixie Dust 1

A tiny woodland fairy princess. Her bow puts creatures to sleep; her dust lets others fly.

Robo Thom

Robot 1 · Adventurer 1

Laser Sword 1 · Robot Plates 1 · Control Electricity 1 · Computer Brain 1

Made by goblin machine-makers, he escaped. Now he fights to make sure everyone is free.

Captain Ginny

Human 0 · Pirate Captain 2

Cutlass 1 · Swashbuckling 1 · Summon Pirate Crew 1 · Pirate Sloop 1

A captain with a big hat and gift for gathering a crew. She wants treasure!

Nestor

Cat-Person 1 · Investigator 1

Cat-Pounce 1 · Cat Leap 1 · Smell A Clue 1 · Magic Glasses 1

A cat who drank enchanted milk and became a cat-person. Very, very curious.

Lilly

Unicorn 1 · Guardian 1

Hooves 1 · Sacred Aura 1 · Healing Horn 1 · Amulet of Warning 1

A magical guardian of good creatures. Her amulet points to trouble.

Tips for the Dungeon Master

The DM describes the world and makes sure everyone has fun — not beats the players.

GOLDEN RULES FOR THE DM

Think of each character's **motivation**. Build adventures around what each hero cares about.

When players invent a better idea, **use their idea**.

Describe failure as '**something new happens**' — not 'you were wrong'.

Keep consequences **gentle but interesting**. A hero only leaves if their player agrees.

It's totally fine to say '**I don't know — what do you think?**'

A good adventure has:

- **A clear problem** — something is wrong and heroes can fix it
- **Interesting people to talk to** — not every challenge needs dice
- **2–4 challenges** plus one per character, scaled to Donjon Level
- **Multiple rewards** — so every character's motivation is served

THE SUNNY BELL ADVENTURE

A First Adventure for Young Heroes

A ready-to-run adventure for 45–60 minutes

FOR THE GROWN-UP RUNNING THE GAME

You do not need to prepare anything.

You do not need to read ahead.

You do not need to be an expert.

Read the sections marked READ ALOUD.

Ask the questions shown. Let the players decide what happens.

There is no wrong way to play.

What This Adventure Is About

A friendly town uses a magical bell to keep monsters calm and people safe. The bell has stopped ringing. Without it:

- Animals are acting strange
- People are worried
- The forest feels scary again

FOUR PARTS

Part 1: The Town With No Bell

Part 2: The Road of Small Trouble

Part 3: The Bell Tower Mystery

Part 4: Ringing the Bell Again

PART 1

THE TOWN WITH NO BELL

You are walking into a small town with bright houses and friendly people.

Something feels wrong. Everything is very quiet.

At the center of town is a tall tower. At the top is a bell. The bell is not ringing.

The Bell

Tell the players: the bell rings every morning and evening. It keeps wild creatures calm. Today it did not ring.

Mayor Lettle — Kind, Nervous

"The bell stopped last night. No one knows why."

Old Gardener Plum — Calm, Wise

"The forest feels restless. Like it is waiting."

A Child With A Wooden Sword — Excited

"I heard a strange sound near the tower at night."

PART 2

THE ROAD OF SMALL TROUBLE

Choose one or two problems for the journey:

Problem 1: The Nervous Goat [Easy — 1 die]

A goat blocks the road and refuses to move. Ask: How do you calm it? How do you pass?

Problem 2: The Slippery Bridge [Hard — 3 dice]

Wet boards, rushing water below. Ask: Who goes first? How do others help?

Problem 3: The Whispering Bushes [Really Hard — 6 dice]

The bushes whisper names. Distracting but harmless. Ask: How do you ignore or stop them?

PART 3

THE BELL TOWER MYSTERY

You reach the tall stone tower. The door is slightly open.

Inside, you hear something small moving.

Inside

The bell is still there. Not broken. But the rope is tangled.

The Secret

A tiny Bell Sprite lives in the tower. Bell Sprites love music, hate fighting, and get scared easily. This one is hiding.

Finding the Sprite [Hard — 3 dice]

Players may call softly, sing, make music, or promise help. If they succeed, the sprite appears, looking embarrassed.

The Truth

"I got scared when I heard shouting. I hid. The rope tangled."

PART 4

RINGING THE BELL AGAIN

Let the players decide how to fix it:

Calm the sprite • Untangle the rope • Play music • Promise the town will be kinder • Guard the tower

The Final Roll [Hard — 3 dice]

Success: the bell rings, the town is safe. Failure: it takes a moment — then someone helps at the last second. No one fails completely.

The bell rings across the town. People smile.

The animals calm down. The mayor thanks you. You are heroes.

Rewards

Each hero earns Treasures equal to the Donjon Level of each problem solved.

Ask each player: **What does your hero do next?**

FINAL NOTE

If the children change the story, invent new solutions, or ignore the written path — that is correct play.

This adventure is a guide, not a rule.

LITTLE DONJONS — HERO SHEET

NAME:

CLASS:

RACE:

MOTIVATION:

GEAR	NAME / DESCRIPTION	RANK
WEAPON		<input type="text"/>
ARMOR		<input type="text"/>
SPELL		<input type="text"/>
SPECIAL ITEM		<input type="text"/>

TREASURES:

LEVEL:

APPEARANCE / NOTES:

— cut here —

LITTLE DONJONS — HERO SHEET

NAME:

CLASS:

RACE:

MOTIVATION:

GEAR	NAME / DESCRIPTION	RANK
WEAPON		<input type="text"/>
ARMOR		<input type="text"/>
SPELL		<input type="text"/>
SPECIAL ITEM		<input type="text"/>

TREASURES:

LEVEL:

APPEARANCE / NOTES: