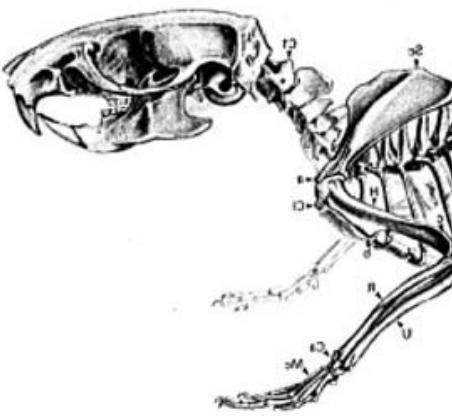




You sneak around in tunnels beneath the ground, fighting for loot and dominance over your brethren. You are a Rat.

To play, you need a deck of playing cards, a bunch of polyhedral dice, a pack of 3x5 cards, and poker chips (or other counters).

This game is for 4-6 players. Each player creates a Rat character to play.



Follow these steps to create your Rat:

1. Take your free dice. You get 1d4, 1d6, 1d8 and 1d10.
 2. Add your bonus dice. You get two more dice of any kind. Take them and add them to your free dice.
 3. Name your Rat. Your name must be a common English word of one or two syllables, like Catch, Runner, Gurgle, or Spite.
 4. Take your tunnel cards. You draw 5 tunnel cards from the deck. Starting with the oldest player and going clockwise, each player takes a turn.

During your turn, all the Rats explore a tunnel

together. Play a card from your hand and read the entry for that card on the Tunnel Guide sheet. Each tunnel card represents a challenge that the Rats must try to overcome. The face value of the card corresponds to the difficulty of the challenge. The suit of the card determines the type of challenge. There are three different challenge types:

♣ Clubs: Fight

♠ Spades: Sneak

♦ Diamonds: Think

To overcome a challenge, everyone rolls all of their dice.

Dice that show 2, 3, or 4 are **fighting** successes.

Dice that show 5, 6 or 7 are **sneaking** successes.

Dice that show 8, 9, or 10 are **thinking** successes.

Each player compares their successes of the appropriate type to the difficulty rating of the challenge.

If you roll a number of successes that are equal to or greater than the challenge difficulty, you **pass** the challenge. Say how your rat passes the challenge.

If you roll the most successes, *and* pass the challenge, you **win** the challenge (ties are broken by number of rolled successes in the other two challenge types). Say how your rat wins the challenge, outperforming the other rats. Take the tunnel card for this challenge and keep it face up in front of you. You're going to keep every card you win, and try to make a 5-card poker hand with them. This 5-card poker hand is called your **Dominance** hand. More on this further on.

Hate

Rats hate almost everything, starting with themselves and each other. No matter what they do, it's never good enough. Each die that shows a 1 gives your rat a point of Hate. Take a red poker chip for each Hate point you earn. The winner of the challenge does not get any Hate.

Loot

When you pass a challenge you get Loot. Each player may choose one item from the following list. Players choose in order of successes (ties are broken by number of rolled successes in the other two challenge types). Each item can only be chosen by one player.

- Bits of metal! — Take a bonus d4
 - Shards of glass! — Take a bonus d6
 - Puddle of oil! — Take a bonus d8
 - Scraps of paper! — Take a bonus d10
 - Pretty shiny object! — Reduce your rat's Hate by any amount (minimum 1).

Losing

If you don't roll enough successes of the proper type, you lose the challenge. Say how your rat fails. Your rat loses a die, to represent wounds and fears it suffers. You get to decide which die to lose. Set it aside on a 3x5 card labeled "wounds."

Burrowing

Heart cards don't represent a tunnel or a challenge. When you play a Heart, your Rat burrows and heals its wounds. When you burrow, take any number of dice from your "wounds" marker and add them back into your main pool. While you burrow, your rat schemes and fumes and is consumed with hatred. Take 1 Hate for each wound die that you heal.

Discard the heart card after you burrow.

Hate – What's it good for?

A rat is a little burning engine of hatred. When a rat is content and happy, it loses its edge. Too much hate, however, can lead to self destruction.

A rat can expend its hate in a burst of fury to help it overcome a challenge. You can spend 2 points of Hate to re-roll any die that does not show 1. You may re-roll a given die only once (though other players can spend Hate to re-roll that die).

A rat can expend its hate by running madly through the maze of tunnels and discovering new passageways. Spend 1 Hate to draw a new tunnel card. If you have more than 5 cards, you must discard down to 5. You can spend up to 5 Hate in this way and re-draw your whole hand if you like. You can do this at any time.

Once each player has taken a turn, the round is over. The rats return to their nest.

The Nest Phase

The player with the best Dominance hand is the Dominant Rat during the nest phase. The best hand is determined using standard poker hand rankings.

The Dominant Rat gets to decide a few things during the nest phase.

Scrap

The rat with the highest Hate total must fight another rat in the nest. The Dominant Rat chooses which rat will fight (it may choose itself). If several rats are tied for most Hate, the Dominant Rat chooses which one will fight. See Rat vs. Rat, below.

After the mandatory scrap, any player may challenge any other to a scrap. You only get one challenge per nest phase. If you decline a challenge, you lose all of your Hate.

Mate

The Dominant Rat chooses which rat may mate (it can choose itself). That rat loses half its Hate. All other rats gain 1 Hate.

Steal

The player with the least amount of Hate puts forward a die from their pool. If several players are tied for least Hate, they all put a die forward. The Dominant Rat takes one die and keeps it. The rat whose die is stolen gains 1 Hate.

Rat vs. Rat

When two rats fight each other, each player rolls all of their dice.

Fighting successes are used for attack.

Sneaking successes are used for defense.

Thinking successes are used for tactics.

Compare the Fighting total of each rat to the Sneaking total of the other. If your Fighting is higher than your opponent's Sneaking you wound them, and vice versa (remember, when you're wounded, you lose a die and place it on your wounds marker).

To determine who wins the scrap, add your tactics successes plus the difference between your Fighting and your opponent's Sneaking. Highest total wins. In the case of a tie, the Rat with the most total fighting successes wins. If you're still tied, compare total sneaking successes, and then total tactics if you need to. If those are all tied, the duel is a draw. Roll again.

The winner of a scrap may take one of the following from its opponent:

- A die (winner chooses)
- A card from the dominance hand (winner chooses)

Winning the Game

You play multiple rounds, decided ahead of time. Usually 10. The goal is to have the best Dominance Hand after the last round. A round is everyone taking one turn, remember? So there's one Nest Phase per round. You try to improve your dominance hand during every tunnel phase and then possibly by scrapping (or avoiding a scrap) during the Nest Phase.

DIFFICULTY NUMBERS

2-4	2
5-7	3
8-10	4
FACE CARD, ACE	5

RATS is by John Harper
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It was written for the Ronnies 24-Hour RPG contest, but since it's not really an RPG (more of a weird boardgame kinda thing) it wasn't submitted.

Thanks to The Forge, Ron Edwards, Wilhelm Fitzpatrick, Brandon Amancio, Philip LaRose, and Matt Wilson.

