

DORK TOWER™

By Steve Jackson and Philip Reed

Illustrated by John Kovalic

Development Assistance by Giles Schildt

Playtesters: Gina Fischer, Fade Manley,
Mark Schmidt, Mia Sherman, Steve Sopko,
Monica Stephens, Loren Wiseman

Dork Tower is a trademark of John Kovalic.

The all-seeing pyramid is a registered trademark of Steve Jackson Games.
Copyright © 2003 by Steve Jackson Games Incorporated. All rights reserved.

This game can be played by 2 to 6 players, but it's best with 3, 4, or 5.



Scroll Cards

These 20 cards represent enchanted scrolls. Like items, they may be won in combat, or bought. These are all one-shot cards, discarded after use.

Scrolls take effect in the order played. You may not “take back” a scroll card after someone else plays another one.

You may never hold more than three scrolls in your hand when it is not your turn.

The Tokens

Encounter Tokens: These are placed on the board when you have an encounter. Most of them are monsters, and if you fail to destroy them immediately, they stick around until they are slain. The back of the token shows the rewards that you claim when that monster is defeated. All monsters give you experience (XP) when you slay them, and most have treasure. See *Battle Monsters*, below.

Gold Tokens: Gold, gold, beautiful gold. Earn it by killing monsters, selling items, or – as a last resort – working. Spend it to buy useful stuff!

Experience Tokens: Earned when you defeat monsters. They may be spent in many different ways: see the reference sheet.

Quest Tokens: These two tokens show where a character may go to complete a Quest.

The Board

The gameboard has eight main sections: six named kingdoms and two unnamed wilderness areas. The smaller divisions on the board are called “spaces.” There are several types of space; see below.

Winning the Game

The player who defeats the evil wizard Z’Mindrik is the winner! You may attack the wizard’s tower at any time – but it’s a good idea to prepare for the great battle by exploring the world and defeating lesser evils first. This will bring you powerful treasures, as well as experience in the art of bashing things in the head. Also, if you attack Z’Mindrik and lose, you’re toast, so make sure you’re ready.

Setup

Assemble the 3-D tower. (It’s not rocket science. Igor can do it.) Put it in the middle of the board so that the door is aligned with the wilderness area that lies between the kingdoms of Ravensteel and Thunderhawk.

The Item and Scroll decks must be separated, shuffled, and placed to one side. The Scrolls are face-down. Item cards have items on both sides; the “equipment” (white) side should be up, so the “magic item” (purple) side is hidden.

The experience and gold tokens should be put in a “bank” area so everyone can get the tokens they earn.

The encounter tokens (the medium-sized disks with monster pictures) are placed in a cup . . . or just use the box lid.

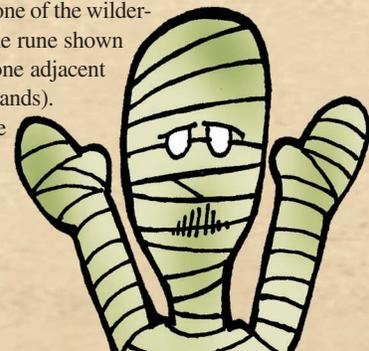
Each player starts the game with 60 gold pieces and one Scroll card.

Roll the two dice to determine who goes first. High roller starts the game (tied winners re-roll). The player with the highest roll selects a character and takes that marker and character sheet. Then the other players do so in turn, going clockwise.

Each player starts in a different kingdom. Put your character marker in the city space of the kingdom most nearly in front of you.

Now set the first two Quests. Each of the Quest tokens goes into one of the wilderness areas, on the rune shown at the left (the one adjacent to the Shadowlands).

The game can begin!



Introduction

What do Matt, Igor, Gilly, and the rest of the gang do in *Dork Tower*? When they’re not dealing with trivial distractions like food, work, and sleep, they’re roleplaying. This game lets you play the *Dork Tower* characters . . . as they play their characters!

The evil wizard Z’Mindrik has cursed the land with monsters. You can’t so much as set foot out of the city without tripping over a bugbear. Who will be the hero that saves the fair land of Aurora?

This game is, in part, an homage to a great fantasy boardgame that most of you have never seen. Milton Bradley/Hasbro released Dark Tower in 1981. It was the first boardgame to make significant use of a microprocessor . . . the tower in the middle of the board had buttons to let the players enter their decisions, and it acted as a Game Master! Unfortunately, a used copy today will set you back \$200 or so . . .

Components

- ✦ This rulesheet, including six double-sided character sheets and a separate sheet of tables.
- ✦ The game board.
- ✦ 56 game cards.
- ✦ One large cardstock sheet with six die-cut character tokens (the large disks), a horde of encounter tokens (the medium-sized disks), the tower, two Quest tokens, three different Curse markers, and an assortment of experience (XP) and gold markers.
- ✦ Two sparkly dice. Oooo! Treasure!

The Cards

There are two types of cards in the game. Keep separate discard stacks for each type, and reshuffle if a deck runs out. If text on a card disagrees with the rules, follow the card!

Item Cards

There are 36 item cards, each with two sides – a magic item (expensive) on the purple side, a piece of ordinary equipment (less expensive) on the white side. (Yes, the Ring of Warding is on the white side. It’s considered standard equipment. This is, after all, a fantasy world.)

This deck is shuffled and stacked with the equipment side (white) on top, so the magic items are hidden.

When you put an item in play, place it on your character sheet in the appropriate “slot” (see *Character Sheets*), with the chosen side up. Items may be used over and over until you lose them or decide to sell them. You can win items by defeating a foe, or you can buy them in cities (see below).

Armor
Light
to Combat

Wearer of the
light may choose
the effects
... even that
by spells or
trick's curses.

Armor
20 gp

elm of
Chain

to Combat
Helmet
20 gp

High-Level
ELROND HUBBARD
Strength 12
Move 4

Special

Elrond has a +2 bonus in any combat involving Goblins, Orcs, Bugbears, or Kobold-kin. Elrond can cross any mountain.

Backpack



Hea
Shie

+2 to Com
Shield
20 gp

Quests

The land of Aurora is full of heroic quests just crying out for a hero to complete them. At any time there will be two Quest Tokens on the board. Any character may complete a quest by entering a space with a Quest Token and slaying all monster(s) there.

When you enter a space with a Quest Token, your move ends. If there are monsters there, fight them normally. Otherwise, draw the usual number of Encounter Tokens for that space.

If you win, you earn a Scroll card and 5 XP in addition to the standard reward for killing the monsters.

If you lose, you get no reward. Leave the monster tokens where they are.

Either way, that quest is over. Immediately roll on the Quest Location table (on the map) to see where the Quest Token goes next, and place it there.

Characters

Each character has a round marker, which shows his place on the map, and a two-sided character sheet, which starts with the "Low Level" side up.

Your character sheet shows:

- ✦ Your name, combat strength, and movement.
- ✦ Your special abilities and limitations. Some of these will be exceptions to the general rules – for example, some heroes can travel freely across mountains or lakes.
- ✦ Four "slots," on the edges of the sheet, for Item cards. These represent the items you can carry and use. Each item's type (such as Weapon, Armor, or Ring) is shown at the bottom of the card. Each slot may hold only one item. Some can be used for only a single type of item; others give a choice of two types. Some slots are limited . . . for instance, if a slot says "Armor (Max +4), that character cannot use armor that gives more than +4 bonus in regular combat. Special bonuses, such as "+8 against a Dragon," are fine!
- ✦ The "backpack" space, where you place items you cannot use, because you have no slot for them or the appropriate slot is full. Be sure the item card has the correct side up. You may never have more than two items in your backpack. Any time it's not your turn, you may switch items out of your backpack, as long as they go into appropriate slots. You may not place Scrolls in your backpack.

Leveling Up

Once you have 10 experience points, you may choose to "level up." Discard all 10 XP tokens and flip the character sheet to reveal the High-Level version of the hero, with better abilities.

Playing the Game

Start with the first player to choose a character. Turns proceed clockwise. On your turn, do the following:

- ✦ Move up to the number of spaces allowed by your movement (shown on your character sheet). You don't have to use your full move, but you cannot save the unused spaces for later.

- ✦ Draw encounter tokens for the space where you end your move (see below), and resolve the encounter.
- ✦ Perform city actions (see below), if you are in a city.
- ✦ Trade or sell items, if you wish, to another player in the same space.
- ✦ If you have too many Item or Spell cards, discard until you are at the limit (2 items in the backpack, 3 Spells for everyone but Laoretha).
- ✦ Turn the tower one step clockwise. This marks the end of your turn and alerts the next player that his turn has now started.

Moving Around the Board

Each character has a movement value. This is the number of spaces that hero can move each turn. Note that you can spend an XP to move an extra space. (See the chart for other uses of experience points.)

Some spaces are separated by water (blue) or mountains (purple-brown). These borders are harder to cross! See *Lakes and Mountains*, below.

You may not move through a space already occupied by a monster. When you enter a space with a monster – or a stack of them – you must end your turn there and fight (except for Lumpin Lightfingers, who may use his special ability to avoid the foe – see his character sheet).

If you don't want to move on your turn, you don't have to . . . but unless you are in a city you will have to check for encounters, whether you move or stay still.

Check for Encounters

If the space is a city, you won't have an encounter unless there's a Quest token there – skip to *City Actions*, below.

If there is already a monster in the space, you must fight it – skip to *Battle Monsters*, below.

Otherwise, you must draw tokens for your encounter. The number of tokens depends on the type of space and whether it is day or night. See the *Encounters* chart on the map.

Look at the tokens you have drawn. Resolve all NON-monster tokens, in any order you like. These may let you draw item or scroll cards, or require you to draw more tokens. Keep resolving the NON-monster tokens until you have no more. Now you have a monster, or a stack of them, to battle.



Battle Monsters

If an encounter token is a monster (or if there is already a monster on the space when you move into it) you must defeat the monster(s) to remain on that space.

(1) Start with your character's combat strength. Add the bonuses from all items you are carrying (but not those in your backpack). Note that

if you get a bonus against a certain kind of monster, you only get that bonus once, no matter how many monsters you are facing.

(2) Add the effect of any Scroll card that you choose to use now.

(3) Now add up the total strength of all the monsters. Each monster's strength is shown on the front of the token.

(4) Add the effect of any Scroll card that your rivals now use *against* you.

(5) Compare the totals and look at the *Combat Table* (on the map). If they are the same, you will use the "0" line of the Combat Table. If your total is 1 or 2 greater, you will use the "+1 or +2" line, and so on.

(6) Roll two dice. To win, you must roll the number shown on the Combat Table, or *higher*.

Before you roll, you may spend experience points to help yourself . . . spending 4 XP will turn one die into an automatic 6. Note: A few Scrolls can help you *AFTER* you roll – if you have one of these, be ready to use it now!

EXAMPLE: Topdeck, as a low-level character, has a strength of 7. He has a dagger (+1 bonus) and elven chainmail (+3 bonus). His total is 11.

He is fighting two monsters: a Mummy (strength 8) and an Orc Shaman (strength 4). The enemy total is 12. Topdeck is at a -1! He must roll on the "-1 or -2" line. This says he needs an 8 or better to win.

A few Scroll cards will let you remove some monsters before fighting the others. Other than that, there is no "partial victory." You will either kill all the monsters (and get all the rewards), or kill none of them.

Victory!

If you make the needed roll, you won the battle and get the rewards. Flip each monster token over to reveal what you get:

- ✘ You will always get some XP. Take the XP you have earned.
- ✘ Most encounter tokens have a little table on the back; roll one die to see what goodies you get. If the result is "Gold," take the indicated amount. If the result is "Scroll," take the top Scroll card and put it in your hand. If the result is equipment or a magic item, take the top Item card: purple side up for a magic item, white for equipment. You don't have to pay for it; it's yours. Put it on your character sheet.
- ✘ Discard the encounter tokens. (When you run out of encounters, shake up the discards and start over.)

Defeat!

If you fail your combat roll, the monsters beat you. You must now either re-roll, retreat, or DIE.

- ✘ *Re-Roll:* Some scrolls give you the power to re-roll the dice, and right after a failed attack roll is a good time to use this.
- ✘ *Retreat:* Move to an adjacent space with no monster token. You may not cross a mountain or lake during retreat unless you can do so normally. You may not retreat from a dungeon or from the final battle with Z'Mindrik. A carefully chosen retreat can sometimes help you, by putting you closer to your goal. (Your turn ends with your retreat, so you can't draw new encounter tokens, take city actions, complete a Quest, etc., in the space you flee to!)
- ✘ *Die:* If you have no legal space to retreat to, and cannot change your roll, you die (so choose your attacks carefully!). Return to your starting city. Lose all your cards, of all kinds, and all your gold. Keep your XP. On your next turn, the people of the city will feel sorry for the fallen hero . . . they pay to resurrect you, and give you 50 gold.

If you are a high-level character when you die, you will still be high-level when you come back.

A Stack of Monsters!

If you retreat or die, the monster, or the stack of monsters, remains on the board. Any character, except Lumpin, must stay and fight the monsters if he enters that space. No new tokens are drawn if you end your move in a space that already has monsters.

Anyone, at any time, may look at the monsters in an existing stack – both fronts and backs.

It should be obvious that the way to victory is to always take on as many monsters as you can beat, rather than wasting your time with easy little fights . . . but judging how many monsters you can take on is hard, and sometimes a draw of just one token can lead to several monsters.

Starting in a Monster Space

It is possible (though unlikely) that you will start your move in a space containing monsters. If you choose not to move, you may fight them. Otherwise, you may leave the space freely; the monsters do not keep you from moving *out*.

City Actions

If you end in a city, you may either *Buy and Sell*, or *Earn Money*, but not both.

- ✘ **Buy and Sell:** Draw the top two cards from the Item deck; let all players see both sides. Each side represents a different item. If you want to draw more Item cards, you may do so, paying 1 XP per extra draw.

You may purchase only one item from each card. To do so, pay its value in gold, and put the card, with that side up, on your character sheet. You now own this item. (If you choose to buy neither side of a card, you just discard it.)

You may also buy one, and only one, Scroll. These are 50 GP each, and you must pay before drawing the card.

You may also sell items and scrolls for their "face value" (item cards show prices, and scrolls are all worth 50 GP). Take this gold immediately. Discard the cards for the items you sold.

- ✘ **Make Money:** You may choose to work instead of shopping. A low-level character earns 60 GP. A high-level character earns 120. This takes all of your time this turn.

Hint: If you have to leave the game for a minute, move to a city and tell the other players that your character will just stay there making money until you return. When you get back, go shopping!

Trade With Another Player

When you end your move in the same space as another player or players, you may trade or sell items or scrolls. This occurs *before* combat. Note that the other player is not involved in any way in your combat; you must fight your own battles.

You may never sell or trade XP!

Discard Scrolls and Items

If you are about to end your turn and have more than three scrolls, you must discard or play scrolls to get your hand down to three. Likewise, if you have more than two items in your backpack, discard to get down to two.

Turn the Tower

Your last action on your turn is to rotate the tower one step clockwise. This moves the tower door and the day/night locations, and notifies the next player that it is his turn.



Map Spaces

The spaces on the map are divided by black lines. Some of these lines are heavier . . . they define kingdom borders. The kingdoms of Aurora are conveniently wedge-shaped, fitting neatly into the circular map. (There are only six named kingdoms, but there are eight wedges. The other two wedges are wilderness. Some cards refer to “the kingdom you are in.” If you happen to be in a wilderness, read that as “the wilderness you are in.”)

Spaces that are only connected at a corner are not adjacent.

There are several kinds of spaces, and two special kinds of borders. Some spaces have a rune symbol, which is used to determine quest locations.

Cities

City spaces are light green, with a gold castle. Each player starts the game in a different city space.

No encounter tokens are drawn in cities, so a Quest there is usually easy!



Field Spaces

Field spaces are the same light green as city spaces, but with no castle. When you end your move in a field space, draw one encounter token in daytime. Draw two at night.



Forests

Forests are dark green, with a tree pattern. When you end your move in a forest space, draw two encounter tokens in daytime. Draw three at night.

Shadowlands

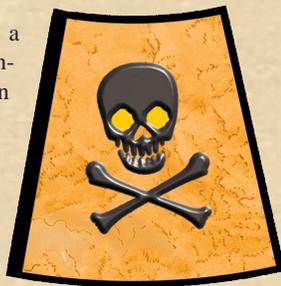
The tower is so evil that it casts its shadow in *all directions*! It is always night in the eight dark-colored spaces around the tower, regardless of which way it faces. You always draw two encounter tokens when you end your move in a shadow space.

These spaces are the only way to enter the tower (see below).

Dungeons

Dungeon spaces are brown, with a skull. When you end your move in a dungeon space, draw three encounter tokens in daytime. Draw four at night.

Dungeon encounters are dangerous. If you lose in a dungeon, you cannot retreat: you DIE. On the other hand, if you win a dungeon encounter, draw one extra magic item.



Lakes and Mountains

These are not spaces . . . they are special borders. You cannot cross a lake (blue) or mountain (brown) border unless:

Your hero has a special ability, scroll, or magic item, OR

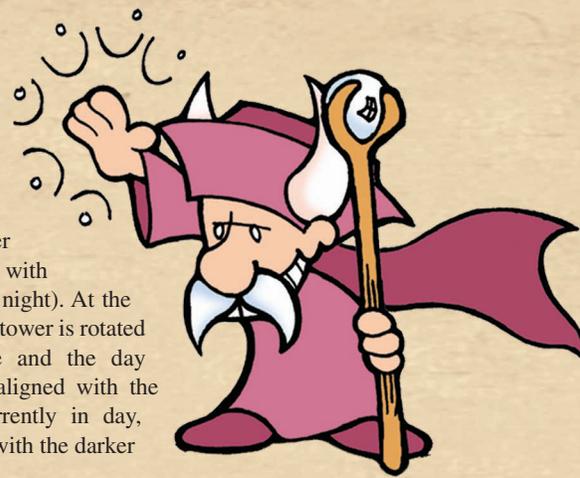
You spend 2 experience points, OR

You start next to the border and spend your entire movement to cross it.



The Tower

In the center of the board is the tower of the evil wizard. Four of the tower's walls are light gray with a sun symbol (for day), and the other four are darker gray with a moon symbol (for night). At the end of each turn, the tower is rotated one step clockwise and the day progresses. Spaces aligned with the lighter side are currently in day, while those aligned with the darker side are in night.



Entering the Tower

The wizard's tower has a single door, which is on the right side. The only way to enter the tower is to move to the shadow space next to the door.

You do not HAVE to enter the tower just because you ended your move in front of the door. To enter the tower you must declare your intent to do so (this does not count as moving another space). You immediately climb to the top of the tower to battle the evil wizard Z'Mindrik himself! See *Fighting the Wizard*, below.

Fighting the Wizard

Once you reach the top of the tower (see above), you may battle the wizard. Z'Mindrik is a very tough foe:

- ❖ He does not have a combat strength of his own. He fights by summoning monsters. Draw FIVE tokens. Ignore any “friendly” results like Merchant and Enchanter, and redraw. Yes, Lairs and Tombs count, making you fight extra monsters!
- ❖ If your rivals have scrolls that affect die rolls, give bonuses to monsters, and so on, they can use them to help Z'Mindrik . . . and they probably will, since if you beat him, you win and THEY LOSE.

If you defeat Z'Mindrik, you win. You have saved Aurora!

If you lose, and have an appropriate scroll, you can change or re-roll your dice.

You cannot retreat, though! If you lose and cannot save yourself with a scroll, Z'Mindrik slays you horribly. On your next turn, you will be resurrected in your starting city.

Discard all Z'Mindrik's monsters. The next player to attack him will draw new guardians.

Strategy Tips

Remember . . . it's a social game. You can play without even talking to your rivals, but you'll do better if you make deals, swap items, negotiate for the strategic use (or non-use) of scrolls, and so on.

Once you level up and have some XP to burn, you should consider provoking lots of curses from Z'Mindrik! The chances are very good that they will hurt your rivals much more than they hurt you. And they're very, very evil!

www.sjgames.com/dorktower/
www.dorktower.com