

Dungeon Crawl: Risus ***(aka RISUS - Domino Writing style)***

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If you're a long-time tabletop role playing gamer, you know the tropes and clichés of the dungeon crawl inside and out - elves, dwarves, magical missiles, warriors that stand and fight, wizards that start weak and eventually get unbelievably powerful, and so on. Almost any game system you use, whether published as a hardcover book, a PDF or even an HTML document full of poor spelling, requires complicated math to create a character, or is so simplistic that you can never create exactly the character you want. That ends now!

Dungeon Crawl: Risus (from now on “DC:R”) uses the simple, easy-for-everyone Risus: The Anything RPG rules by S. John Ross and folds in the expected elements of the classic fantasy setting. It's not the first take on fantasy in Risus, but it is the most complete. It eliminates the vague parts of Risus and the superfluous details of most fantasy RPGs and makes a smooth, easy to run game. These rules assume you know how tabletop role playing games work, and are at least familiar with the basic fantasy clichés. These rules can also be used with other game settings, like space opera, westerns and contemporary supernatural adventures without significant changes.

What You Need To Play

- ★ A copy of the **Risus rules** (<http://www222.pair.com/sjohn/risus.htm>). The Risus Companion and other Risus ideas found online are optional and can make the game more fun, but they are not necessary.
- ★ **4d6** per player, including the Game Master (GM). You may also need other dice.
- ★ A copy of the **character sheet** for each player (at the end of this document).
- ★ An **adventure**, either one specifically for DC:R, or any other game system - rules to convert monsters, treasures and other elements is included here.
- ★ **Battle maps and miniatures**, if you wish (optional rules are found here).

- ★ You don't need any other RPG books, but if you're using a particular setting or type of character from one of those books, you may want to have it as a point of reference.
- ★ Pencils, snacks and other traditional tabletop RPG stuff.

Creating Characters

Instead of using the “classic countdown” of clichés at dice values 4, 3, 2 and 1, your character's dice will be assigned the following way, no matter what kind of hero (or anti-hero) you play.

RACE (2), CLASS (4), OTHER (3), Rerolls 3

RACE: As in standard Risus, what your clichés represent is entirely up to you and the GM. But if you have another RPG book, flip it open to your chosen race entry, where you'll find the abilities and personality traits your race cliché covers. You can even have multiple races, if the GM allows it (time for that were-boar demon-spawn half-dragon half-aquatic halfling at last).

This cliché is used for certain activities the character attempts, like the human who tries to blend into a crowd or the dragon-kin who can breathe fire.

“Race” can also represent a character's home location, culture or background, instead of simply being the character's species. A “Wood Elf” or “Aquatic Halfling” has a different set of skills than a standard fantasy elf or halfling.

An “Innocent Who Is Secretly The Last In A Line Of Mystic Knights” and a “Wanderer In The Wilderness Refusing To Claim His Throne” may both be humans, but they have strikingly different abilities, even before they choose a career path.

CLASS: This is similar to race. You can turn to another RPG book if you need specifics on what your class cliché represents. This can be any class you choose, from something as simple as “Warrior” to “Psionic Scholar-Swordswoman Of The Goddess Of Music And Art,” again, if the GM allows it. A character’s class doesn’t just have to be the hero’s job. It might also be the character’s archetype (like “sarcastic best friend” or “smart and strong”), combat style (“karate,” “fencing,” etc.), position in an organization (like “thieves’ guild lieutenant” or “squire of a Knight of the Dragon”), or something else.

You can have multiple classes included in this cliché, but keep in mind that if the cliché suffers damage, all of the classes are weaker. Your character’s level may also determine the exact class abilities you can use.

This cliché is the one that’s most often used (that’s why it has a value of 4), especially in combat or to do the things everyone expects - rogues pick locks, bards inspire their companions with rousing songs, rangers follow tracks, etc.

It also represents most of your attacks, including basic weapons and most common spells. Swords, bows, fireballs, blasts of arcane force and the like don’t need their own clichés or special notes on the character sheet. Finally, the class cliché typically represents defenses like armor, willpower and stamina, also known as “saving throws” in fantasy RPGs.

OTHER: This cliché can be almost anything, though it helps if it fleshes out the character more. The character’s class cliché might be “Cleric Of The Sun God,” but this cliché might be “Temple Leader Of A Sect That Promotes Healing More Than Undead-Slaying.” A paladin could be a member of the “Order Of The Stag.” A fighter may be an “Escaped Arena Gladiator,” and a sorcerer “Specialist In Illusion Magic.”

If you’re not combining races or classes in your other clichés, you could represent a secondary race or class with this cliché.

Alternately, this cliché could represent a very special piece of equipment, something above

and beyond the “tools of the trade” (items included in the class or race description). While a broadsword would be considered standard gear for a fighter, a “Double-Headed Axe Of Dragon Slaying” might be powerful enough to have its own cliché. A wizard would be known around the world with her own “Personal Demi-Plane Of Magic.” And no shape-changing druid is complete without an “Animal Companion” of some kind.

It could also represent a special connection the character has with another player’s character, or an NPC. Think of classic concepts like “True Love,” “Mentor” or “Arch Rival.”

This cliché might simply be something strange, like one of the ideas presented in the Risus Companion. This is more suitable for a less serious game, though “TV Repairman” exploring a fantasy world might be able to adapt medieval technology to create useful devices!

Finally, your last die is traded in for 3 free **REROLLS**. These can be used at any time - just tell the GM - and you can even use more than one in a row, if you want. You can spend a reroll to roll your own dice, have another player reroll his dice, or even force the GM to reroll her dice. The reroll can be made with one, some, or all of the dice (for example, if you roll a 6, 5, and 1, you probably only want to reroll the 1).

You start each game session with 3 rerolls. Once they’re used up, that’s it until the next game session.

If you have the Risus Companion or another resource, you can swap your rerolls for lucky shots or another option. You can also spend more of your character creation dice to buy more lucky shots, sidekicks, or whatever you would like, as long as the GM allows it.

Any or all of the Advanced Options can be used in DC:R, though it’s up to you how to assign dice if you’re using Advanced Option IV: Funky Dice (no d30 allowed). In classic fantasy RPGs, characters are already ultra-powerful or extremely vulnerable, so Advanced Option II: Pumping Clichés and Advanced Option III: Double-Pumps aren’t really appropriate to the genre. Advanced Option I: Hooks and Tales can

be used as-is, though. Assign extra dice from that option as you wish - but remember the limit of 6 dice in one cliché.

Rules

Refer to the standard Risus rules (and, if necessary, your preferred other fantasy RPG) for the rules of play, except as listed here.

Cinematic Description And Playing In Character

The GM will award you a bonus if you describe your action in an exciting way, telling the other players how your hero is not just swinging his sword, but is “leaping forward, calling out the name of his god as he tries to behead the monster,” for example. Every kind of action can benefit from a more cinematic description, like the spy who “slips underneath a nearby cart until the guards have passed” to the player who actually gives a brief speech when her character is trying to win the townspeople to her side.

In the same way, the GM may award similar bonuses to players who play according to the personality their character's clichés describe - even if it isn't in the party's best interest. The classic example is the paladin who refuses to commit a criminal act, despite theft being the best choice at the moment. A more positive example of playing in character is the player of a dwarf character seeking out the best tavern in every village to sample its ale.

A minor bonus is a +1 or more (at most +3) modifier to a single die result in a cliché roll. For example, with dice rolls of 3 and 6, a +1 modifier would boost the dice to a 4 and 6.

A major bonus is an extra die (and in very special cases, two dice) added to a cliché roll.

An especially exciting description, or something that makes everyone at the table laugh, may even result in the character regaining one of the rerolls he already used during the game session.

Using Miniatures (optional, but preferred)

Using miniatures and a battle map or playing surface, the scale is: 1 square, hex or inch (a space) equals 5 feet or 2 meters.

Standard human-like characters have a Speed of 6 spaces per turn, in any direction. Characters with heavy armor, a lot of gear and/or short legs may move only 5 per turn, if the GM chooses.

Difficult terrain and elevation “costs” 2 spaces per square, hex or inch. Ranged weapons like bows or spells have a range of 25 spaces. Thrown weapons like daggers or vials of acid have a range of 10 spaces.

You can even use rules for cover, flanking, and the like, if you wish. In most other games, a small penalty or bonus of +/-1 or +/-2 is one die in the appropriate cliché in DC:R. A penalty or bonus of +/-3 or +/-4 is two dice in the appropriate cliché in DC:R, and so on.

Combat

Initiative: At the beginning of a battle, each player rolls 2d6, and the GM rolls for each enemy or group of enemies. Ties are rerolled. clichés aren't used in this die roll. The character or enemy with the highest result goes first.

Play goes left/clockwise around the table (or in order of initiative rolls) until either the heroes or the enemies are all defeated (killed, captured, retreating, etc.).

Actions: Characters can take two actions on their turn, in either order. Defending against attacks using any appropriate cliché and performing simple actions like speaking or drawing a weapon does not count as part of a hero's turn.

1. Move up to your Speed
2. Move Again or Attack or Use A Cliché To Attempt Another Activity

Combat Resolution: In the standard Risus rules, all dice rolls are made by adding the dice results together. That leads to the “death spiral,” where a character with more dice is much more likely to win, and keep winning. In a game with a lot of combat meant to cause physical or magical harm, like the typical fantasy adventure, another style of dice rolling is needed. Use the standard conflict rules for other types of combat - things like fast-talk, bargaining, foot races, and so on.

Each player or GM in the combat rolls their chosen cliché's dice. The character with single highest die result wins that turn of the conflict, and, if the attacker wins, forces the defending character to lose one die from the cliché. If the defender has the single highest result, the attack fails, and the attacker's turn is over (unless he can still move). No cliché dice are lost. If all the dice are the same, and each player rolled the same number of dice, roll them all again.

So a player who rolls a 6, 4 and 3 would lose to a player rolling 6 and 5 (the sixes cancel each other out, and the second player has the next highest single die, the five, though his dice total is smaller).

Inappropriate Clichés: This rule can be left as-is, or certain clichés can be off-limits in combat if the GM decides they don't make sense. DC:R adventures are usually more serious than they are comedy, but it's up to the players and GM to decide what they want to include in the game session.

The "other" cliché comes in handy here. Combat most often uses the character's class cliché, but when that's spent, a hero can keep fighting with that special weapon, loyal henchman, or the blessings of his god.

Defeat: As in the standard Risus rules, when an opponent loses all its dice in all its clichés, it is defeated. The hero that struck the final blow decides what happens to it. The same is true for the GM, if a player character is completely out of cliché dice.

Healing: After a battle is over, each hero immediately regains one die in one single cliché. Characters who have a cliché specifically devoted to healing (like "Cleric" or "Apothecary") also roll 1 die (1d6), and can distribute that number of dice of healing to themselves or any other characters they choose.

For example, each member of a party of heroes has Class (2) at the end of a battle. Each immediately recovers one die, back to Class (3). Then, the cleric player rolls a die, with a result of 4. That's four more dice of recovery, given to any characters the cleric player wants. As usual,

a character's cliché cannot be healed above its starting amount.

Critical Hit And Critical Miss (optional): On an attack roll, a character that rolls the highest result on two or more dice (for example, two or more sixes on d6) causes a "critical hit." The attack succeeds, no matter what the defender's dice result is, and causes the defender to lose an additional die in damage.

A character that rolls a result of 1 on every die suffers a "critical miss." The attack fails, no matter what the defender's dice result is, and it has some kind of negative result - the weapon used to make the attack is now useless, the attack hits an ally or the attacking character himself, etc. It's up to the GM to decide exactly what happens.

Criticals are most often used in combat, but these rules can be applied to any activity. A character using his "Librarian" cliché to research a monster's strengths and weaknesses may roll a critical hit, revealing all the monster's secrets after just a few minutes of study, instead of the hours he was expecting.

Monsters And Traps

No matter what the creature or trap the heroes face, it will fall into one of these categories, and have a single cliché of "monster name" or "trap name" and the listed die value. The GM may add additional clichés (like "Vampiric," "Made Of Fire," "Magic User," and so on) to make a monster more challenging.

Very Weak: 1 die

Rats, Bats, Dart In Lock

Weak: 2 dice

Goblins, Wolves, Skeletons, Spikes In Pit

Average: 3 dice

Orcs, Guards, Bears, Hidden Arrows

Tough: 4 dice

Evil Mages, Wraiths, Swinging Blades

Very Tough: 5 dice

Trolls, Vampire Lords, Lightning Blasts

Extremely Tough: 6 or more dice

Dragons, Giants, Criminal Masterminds

Some creatures and traps may have special

effects, like ongoing damage from acid, magical slowness, paralyzation, and so on. Most of these effects simply cause additional dice of damage to whatever cliché of the character's that makes the most sense, until the cliché is overcome. Other effects do whatever seems appropriate to the GM. Consult the rules in the fantasy RPG you're using as reference for more details.

For example, a Thief (3) who fails to disarm a poison dart trap should lose a die from the initial poison, and an additional die a turn later as the poison spreads. An Illusionist (4) suffering from the touch of an energy-draining demon might roll only a single die when making an attack, but be at full cliché dice when attempting other activities.

Don't forget the team up and grunt-squad ideas from the Risus rules. If you're using miniatures and battle maps, however, monsters usually won't form grunt-squads, since the GM will be able to show exactly where every monster is, so they can be fought one-on-one.

Treasure

Enemies may carry a money pouch or guard a horde of gems and coins, and other treasures may be found in locked chests or ancient ruins. Players and the GM can collect treasure and use it to buy weapons, armor and magic, using the rules from another fantasy RPG.

Alternately, roll the monster's largest cliché, and multiply the result by 10. That's the number of gold pieces the monster possessed. Each die that rolls its highest result (6 on a d6, for example) is one magic item of the GM's choice.

Magic items found as treasure will typically offer:

A minor bonus to die rolls that improves a die's result (for example, a +1 sword moving a single attack die from a 4 to a 5), or

A major bonus of an additional die (for example, a magical robe making Wizard (4) into Wizard (5) when casting certain spells), or

An entirely new cliché to a character (like a

Portable Hole (2) that holds everything a hero owns without weighing her down).

Level And Experience Points

Every character starts at Level 1, as a (usually) young, relatively inexperienced hero. Add the characters' levels together and divide by the number of characters in the party to determine the average party level (round down).

Each member of the party gains a number of experience points (XP) equal to the highest cliché die of a monster or trap, if the character was involved in confronting the threat. If the heroes face a significant challenge - one that requires more than a single roll of the dice, like solving a puzzle or returning a treasure to someone - each earns XP equal to the average party level +2.

Total the XP each party member gains and give them to players at the end of the game session. When the heroes have XP equal to 200 x their current level, they advance to the next level and gain one of the following benefits:

- ★ +1 to one cliché die value (maximum 6)
- ★ A new cliché at die value 1, or a die that can be spent on another character creation option from the Risus Companion or another source
- ★ 3 more rerolls per game session
- ★ One cliché increases all of its dice one die size, if you're using Advanced Option IV: Funky Dice. Dice increase from d6 (standard) to d8, d10, d12 and finally d20.

Players who don't make it to the game session get half as many XP (round down) as the other heroes do, just to keep them fairly equal to their companions. Brand-new players joining the game start at the average party level, but with the minimum XP for that level.

Level 1: 0 XP

Level 2: 200 XP

Level 3: 400 XP

Level 4: 800 XP

Level 5: 1000 XP, and so on.

There's no maximum level for characters.

Dungeon Crawl: Risus

Character Sheet

Name:

Level:

Speed:

Player:

Experience Points (XP)

RPG book used as reference:

<i>Cliché</i>	<i>Dice Value</i>	<i>Temporary Dice Value</i>
RACE: What it's used for:	2	
CLASS: What it's used for:	4	
OTHER: What it's used for:	3	

Rerolls

Treasure:

Notes:

You can find more resources for **Dungeon Crawl: Risus** at these web locations:

Risus Rules, S. John Ross: <http://www222.pair.com/sjohn/risus.htm>

Altars And Archetypes, Graham Jackson: <http://altarsandarchetypes.webs.com/>

Domnio, Uncle Bear: <http://domnio.wordpress.com/>

Heroes Of Oz, Darkstar Eclectic Media: <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Heroes-of-Oz-Roleplaying-Game-and-Guidebook/126864448578>

New Clichés For Old, Greywulf's Lair: <http://greywulf.net/2010/03/risus-new-clichés-for-old/>

Risusverse, a collection of game ideas: <http://risusiverse.wetpaint.com/>