

WORD WARS

By Anna Blackwell

Words have power, little ones. The power to make gods of mice and ruin of kings. You have, all around you, this power. It lives in your magazines and newspapers, your penny dreadful romances and BOGOF fantasy books. I ask of you: harness this power and take part in the Word Wars!

Word Wars, for all the ancient soothsaying, is a simple game. First, assemble a group of three or more friends. Secondly, get a stack of wordy things you can stand to destroy. (Use this page if you like!) Thirdly, get a pair of scissors each, for the ancients were obsessed with arts and crafts.

Word Wars has three main phases:

GATHERING THE WORDS!

Set a ten-minute timer and start cutting out words into a pile or tub in front of you. You'll mostly be looking for names and adjectives, but use whatever takes your fancy. Cut out as many as you can!

Once the timer has ended it's time to start the game properly.

CHOOSING YOUR BATTLES!

Now that everyone has their 'deck' of words it's time to determine what the competition will be. You can either use the table provided below or take it in turns to come up with something hilarious and unique like "most likely to die in a horror film" or "highest-ranking member of the Church of Scientology".

Once you've chosen the contest, set a timer for 15 seconds and make a champion. Champions are made up of at least one noun/name and up to three adjectives or verbs.

Roll a six-sided die to determine:

- 1: A straight-up fight to the death.
- 2: A battle of wits and intelligence.
- 3: Compete to charm a stranger.
- 4: Prove who is the strongest in a feat of strength.
- 5: Opposite Day! The weakest champion wins.
- 6: Roller makes up a competition.

CLEARING THE SMOKE!

Once the timer has finished, reveal your hastily-created champions to each other and take it in turns to describe how your hero deals with the task at hand.

Example: 'Tiny Mariah' vs 'Reckless Spirits' at a sumo wrestling match. Mariah gives it her best; being small she has something to prove, but raw emotion isn't likely to offer much against spirits.

WHO MADE THIS?

Anna Blackwell is a freelance game designer and writer who, as well as creating the narrative-centric RPG *Those Who Play*, runs this very column! She likes games with unique mechanics and components and aims to publish some this year. To keep up-to-date or to get your microgame featured, follow her at @BlackwellWriter

Chat through the possible outcomes and vote on who you think would win. In the result of a tie, no points are given.

The only rules for deciding the winner are that they must be capable of it without outside help. i.e. A character can't hire a bodyguard or buy explosives (unless they have a synonym for 'rich').

SCORING

Everybody wins in *Word Wars*, but if you really want to decide a victor, play the best five out of seven.

Some example competitions:

- » Winner of a hotdog-eating contest
- » Best to play board games with
- » Favourite to be stuck on a desert island with
- » Least likely to rob you at gunpoint
- » Ideal romantic partner
- » Most trustworthy to destroy the One Ring
- » Best fit for a rom-com
- » Most likely to survive a zombie outbreak
- » Best superhero
- » Worst villain

RPG VARIANT

Take the first phase from *Word Wars* but focus a lot more on verbs. (Keep your verbs in a separate pile). Once you've got a sizeable pile you're ready to make your champion, give them at least one adjective and two nouns for a name like 'Dashing Lord Cabinet'.

Each take a moment to describe your impromptu hero, then volunteer or vote on who will be the GM first and have them describe the scene.

You meet with your quest-giver in the Leaky Bar. They tell you of a dungeon filled with skeletons. What would you like to do?

Whenever your hero must act, take a verb at random from your verb pile and place it in front of you.

Patronise.

Then describe what your character does in relation to the verb.

Dashing Lord Cabinet pats the quest-giver's hand gently and whispers. "Aww, don't worry, we'll take care of the nasty skelly-wellys for you, little man."

Once you've made your action, either discard your verb if you want a short game or pass it to the person on your left if you want a campaign.

Whenever you beat an enemy you may draw from your noun/adjective pile to get an item or to attach to something/someone to make it better (or worse).

Lord Dashing Cabinet's fiery axe smashes the embarrassing skeleton. ☹

BRUISING

antelope

CARPET

garrulous

SWIMMING

bothersome

BASKET

SLEEP

horse

EXCITABLE

SPRUCE

key

CRYPTIC

fighting

GOOFY

orange

pointy

RUBBISH

grouch

CARVING

duck

LEGS

desperate

PAPER

ENDLESS

TALKING

BATH

knitted

radio

GIG

PO

eleg

FISHING

wooden

BIGOTED

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