

# **OCTOPUS' GARDEN**

*An Undersea RPG for Kids and Kids-At-Heart*

24-HOUR RPG

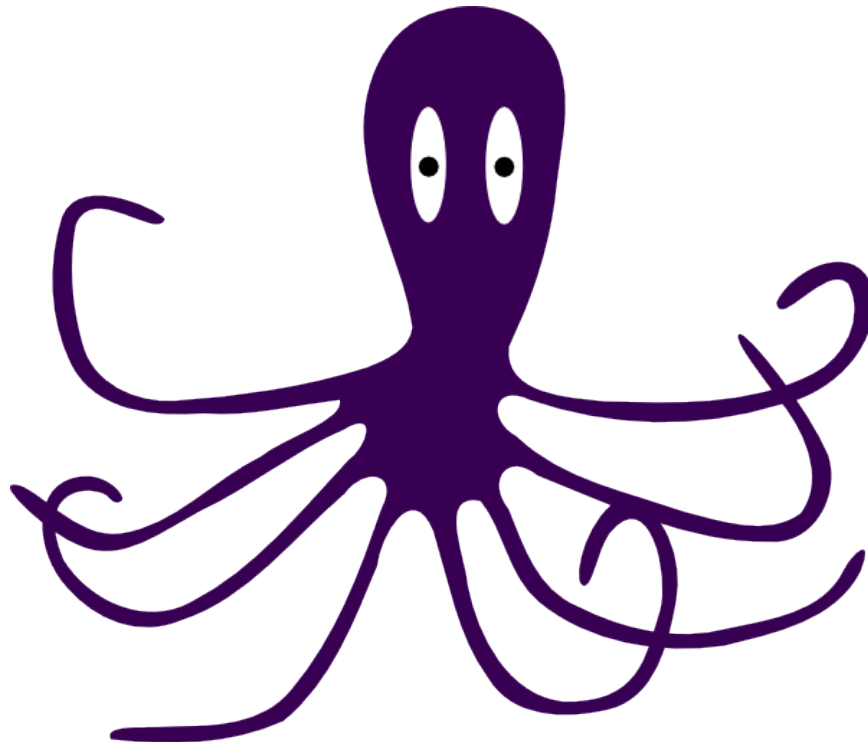
RPG Geek 2010 - 24-Hour RPG

designed by

**Dave Bernazzani**

Saturday 7-Aug-2010 5PM

Sunday 8-Aug-2010 3PM



*I'd like to be under the sea  
In an octopus' garden in the shade*

~Ringo Starr<sup>fish</sup>~

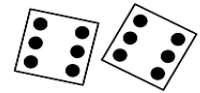
## \* Introduction

The sea is teeming with stories and adventures. Under the waves is a virtual symphony of life ripe for players to explore with their imaginations. All sea creatures sing - though Lubbers (what ocean-life calls any creatures on land - including humans) can rarely hear it. Each aquatic creature contributes to the overall symphony of the ocean. And what a wonderful symphony it is! If you stand quietly on the beach early in the morning and listen carefully, you can hear it.

Role-Playing is, at the core, "let's pretend". It's not really any different than when you played *Cops & Robbers* or *Cowboys & Indians* or whatever other pretend situations you could envision as a kid. Octopus' Garden is a codified set of rules to help govern this world of make believe and turn it into a more structured game. Now, there isn't anything wrong with no-rules make-believe playing - but some may find it rewarding to impose some minimal structure onto the playing and turn it into a game. Octopus' Garden is designed with a minimum of rules which mostly stay out of the way and allow your story to take center stage. Open up your imagination and have fun!

## \* What You Need

The game runs on a pair of normal six-sided dice (henceforth known as a d6 - two are designated as 2d6). Each player has their own pair of dice.



In addition, a third d6 die is needed per player which should, preferably, be of a different color. This special die is called the **Song Die**. This die will be used to track bonuses for the players during the course of an adventure.

The game is designed for as few as 2 players and as many as can comfortably sit around a table to play. Most players take on the role of a single sea creature (called a Player Creature or PC) who represents them in the game world. One of the players has a special role of the Game Master (or GM) - this person sets the stage for an adventure and runs all of the other creatures (called NPCs) in the game world. Turns out the sea is really big - so the role of GM is really special.

In the appendix you will find a Player Creature sheet that can be given to each player to track their character attributes, abilities, etc.

## \* Playable Creatures

Each player in the game (other than the GM) will play the part of a single creature for the adventure. This creature is similar to a part you would play in a movie or stage performance. You control their decisions, actions and their dialog (you did know that all sea creatures can talk to each other, right?!).

Each creature has a set of attributes which are fixed for that creature type (that is, all Crabs have one set of attributes, all Dolphins another set, etc.).

## ~ Attributes ~

Attributes are described in words and all have three tiers. For example, the body of a creature can be Weak, Average or Strong. The speed of a creature can be Slow, Medium or Fast. Each of these has associated with it a mechanical effect that is shown in parenthesis. For example, a Strong Mind would grant a bonus of +2 on any checks involving the Mind.

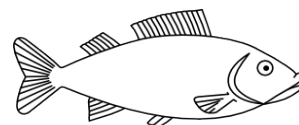
Here is the full list of attributes for each creature:

<b>Mind</b>	- Weak (-2), Average (0), Strong (+2)
<b>Body</b>	- Weak (-2), Average (0), Strong (+2)
<b>Spirit</b>	- Weak (-2), Average (0), Strong (+2)
<b>Attack</b>	- Weak (-2), Average (0), Strong (+2)
<b>Durability</b>	- Weak (10), Average (15), Strong (20)
<b>Speed</b>	- Slow (-2), Average(0), Fast (+2)
<b>Size</b>	- Small, Average, Large

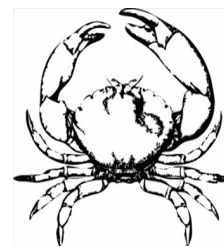
## ~ Creatures ~

The following are a list of creatures that can be chosen by the players:

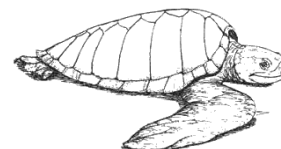
**Fish** - Any of an assortment of basic Sea fishes including Sea Bass, Flounder and Ocean Trout. Fish are plentiful and are the backbone of the seas. They are the creature that runs right down the middle of the plate - having no glaring weaknesses nor strengths.



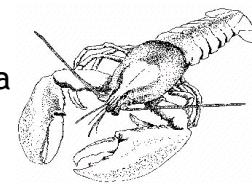
**Crab** - Crabs are numerous and the most commonly encountered crabs in adventures are the Blue Crab, Rock Crab, Stone Crab and the venerable Norwegian Crab (aka King Crab). Crabs have an indomitable spirit but are not the brightest creatures that Neptune ever created. They have a special ability of being able to crawl sideways (usually called *crabwise*).



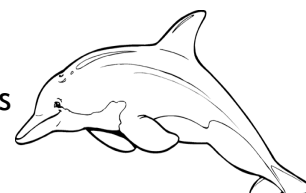
**Turtle** - Most commonly encountered are the and the Sea Turtle, Green Turtle, Loggerhead and Stinkpot Turtle. If fish are the backbone of the sea, the Turtle would be the skeletal system which protects it. The hard shell makes the soft inside easy to protect so long as the turtle remains reasonably upright.



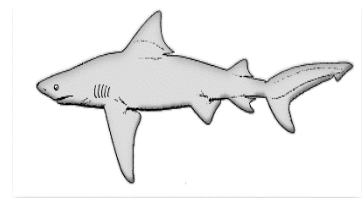
**Lobster** - There are four primary types of lobsters: Clawed, Slipper, Spiny and Deep Sea. An occasional gene mutation causes lobsters to be a blue color but otherwise has no in-game benefits. Lobsters have excellent peripheral vision and make good lookouts.



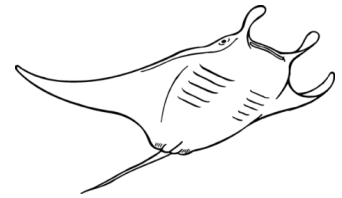
**Dolphin** - These are the scouts of the ocean - always looking for danger and are quite stout and hardy when it comes to protecting other creatures (yes, even Lubbers!). There are 32 species of Dolphins that inhabit the oceans of the world. The most popular are the Common Dolphin, the Bottlenose, the Spotted and the Northern Right Dolphin. Dolphins are speedy and have a good sense of direction.



**Shark** - The true predators of the sea are often misunderstood creatures. They hunt to survive and to protect but never out of any sort of malicious intent. For an adventure they are indispensable as front line bruisers - they can take a bit of punishment. The ocean has hundreds of wonderful varieties of sharks - the most commonly encountered in adventures are the Tiger, Bull, Mako, Hammerhead and the Great White Shark.



**Ray** - One of the most graceful of aquatic life, the various rays are often hard to motivate into adventure as they tend to keep to themselves. But when the stakes are high, they are very dependable. The most common Rays found in adventures are the Manta, Bluntnose, Cownose, Spotted and, of course, the various Stingrays. Adventuring rays have a powerful stinger attack at their disposal.



Summary Table of Attributes and Abilities for each creature type:

	<b>Fish</b>	<b>Crab</b>	<b>Turtle</b>	<b>Lobster</b>	<b>Dolphin</b>	<b>Shark</b>	<b>Stingray</b>
<b>MIND</b>	Average	Weak	Average	Average	Strong	Weak	Weak
<b>BODY</b>	Average	Average	Strong	Strong	Weak	Strong	Strong
<b>SPIRIT</b>	Average	Strong	Weak	Average	Strong	Weak	Average
<b>DAMAGE</b>	Average	Average	Average	Weak	Weak	Strong	Strong
<b>DURABILITY</b>	Average	Average	Strong	Strong	Weak	Strong	Weak
<b>SPEED</b>	Average	Average	Slow	Slow	Fast	Weak	Average
<b>SIZE</b>	Average	Small	Average	Small	Large	Large	Average
<b>SPECIAL ABILITY</b>	Can squeeze into tight spots - grants +2 bonus on checks related to tight spaces.	Crabwise - can walk sideways as well as front/back. Grants +2 bonus on checks related to being able to escape in any of the 4 directions.	Turtling! Can pull in legs and head for added defense. Adds +2 bonus to defense against attacks - takes no time to turtle, but takes 1 full turn to unturtle.	Excellent peripheral vision. Grants +2 bonus to spot and notice anything within a 360 degree radius.	Sonar - can tell presence of medium or larger creature / object that is reasonably in front of them up to 200 feet.	Immunity - sharks are immune to toxins, poisons and disease.	Stinger - the Stingray can attack at +2 damage once per encounter.

## \* The Mechanics

The game works around rolling a pair of standard six-sided dice (2d6). This result is compared to either an opposing roll or to a target number depending on the situation called for by the GM. If a player rolls equal to or greater than the opposing number, the player is successful.

As an example, Charlie the Crab wants to perform a basic attack on Larry the Lobster (a non-player character controlled by the GM). A basic attack is done using opposing Body rolls. If Charlie (as a crab) has an average (+0) Body attribute while Larry (as a lobster) has a Strong (+2) body. Each rolls 2d6 (the GM rolls for Larry) and the bonus of +2 is added to Larry's roll. The results are compared - if Charlie's roll (as done by the player) ties or is greater than Larry's roll, Charlie would successfully attack.

In some cases the roll is not opposed. For example, squeezing through a tight crack in a dangerous rock outcropping might be considered difficult and require that the player roll a 9 or higher on their 2d6. If the player is a Fish (+2 when navigating tight spaces) they would get a bonus to their roll.

For rolls that are not opposed, the recommendation for the GM is to keep it simple and use one of the following *task target* thresholds.

### ***Task Targets:***

**Easy Tasks** are vs. the number 5.

**Normal Tasks** are vs. the number 7.

**Hard Tasks** are vs. the number 9.

Remember, 7 is the most common roll on 2d6 so the players (even youngsters) should be able to gauge how likely something is to do (and this provides a great opportunity to teach kids about basic statistics!).

Here are a list of common tasks and the recommended resolution for the GM. These can't cover every possible situation - the GM will determine the best resolution for any given action during the game (and is free to modify those in this table to suit their adventure).

<b><i>Task</i></b>	<b><i>Resolution</i></b>
Basic Attack	Body vs. Body
Negotiation	Mind vs. Mind
Intimidation	Mind vs. Spirit
Detecting Truth/Lie	Mind vs. Mind
Searching for something lost	Body vs. Task Target
Swimming through dangerous area	Body vs. Task Target
Warn Lubber of Danger	Spirit vs. Task Target
Dig and Hide	Body vs. Task Target
Decipher Runes/Symbols/Writing	Mind vs. Task Target

## \* Damage

Each creature can take only so much punishment before they perish and return to the *Great Seabed*. For the sea creatures that can be played as characters, this is shown in the **Durability** attribute. Weaker creatures can sustain fewer points of damage than Hardy creatures. When this number is reduced to zero or below, the creature has died (a book covering the rituals of burying the dead would fill a good-sized bookshelf).

When a creature makes a successful attack, they roll 2d6 for the damage and add their **Damage** attribute bonus to the damage. The damage is applied to the target creature immediately.

## \* Turn Order

Most of the adventure will be done without micromanagement of turns. When an encounter (say, a skirmish between creatures) requires Turn Order, each player involved (and the GM for all other creatures) will roll 2d6 and add their **Speed** Attribute modifier. High numbers go first (break ties by re-rolling).

## \* The Song Die

The sea is full of song! Sadly, most Lubbers can't hear it and even if they did, most don't appreciate it. A few rare Lubbers do hear the song of the sea - composed of billions of individual creatures vibrating harmoniously. But this is very rare. So rare are these Lubbers that when a sea creature finds someone that can hear the song, they are no longer referred to as a Lubber but by their true name.

Each player has a d6 allocated to them known as a *Song Die*. All player's Song Dice start off in the GM's hands at the start of an adventure. If, during the adventure, the players find themselves in a situation where they can apply the lyrics of a song, they may sing out the line or two (no more, please!) and the GM can award them a bonus point on their song die. If the player doesn't have their die yet, the GM hands them their die and they put it on the number 1. Each time the player does this, they can charge up their song die (up to a maximum of 6). At any time and for any reason, these points can be traded in (can use 1 or more - up to the amount so charged) to change your die rolls (can add points to your dice both for checks, attacks and damage). You may also use it to change an opposing roll (to reduce damage, etc) or change the roll of one of your fellow players (only for good, you can't purposely harm them!). If you use the song die to help another player, you must work it into the story (for example: you brush up alongside the sea monster to distract it briefly - enough time for the player to escape unharmed).

Song is the economy of the ocean. Remember, there is a reason choral and chorus have the same root!

## \* Sample Adventures

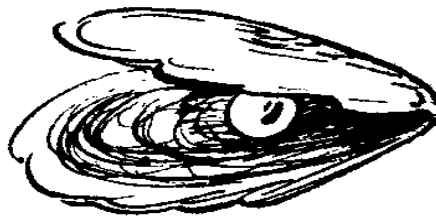
The adventure is created by the GM and the players join together with the GM to go on that journey. It is recommended that you not prepare heavily for an adventure under the seas - let the players drive much of the action - let it be their story. You will be surprised at just how imaginative they can be! The rules for Octopus' Garden are light enough that they should hardly need to be consulted during play - leave things free flowing and when in doubt just make up a rule to cover the situation. Most of all, have fun!

Here are some sample adventures to prime the imagination pump:

#1 Retrieving a Pearl for a royal wedding of King Crabs. The wedding is in 3 days - a great pearl lost to antiquity must be located. But what deep-sea terrors guard the pearl and its secret?!

#2 Looting an old sunken boat to bring treasure to a down-on-his-luck Lubber who has heard the calling of the sea and hums along with its one true song. The sunken boat most certainly does contain treasure, but there is a reason that it went down. And that reason still lurks in the dark places of the sea-bed.

#3 Removing a shark threat from the local beaches. For even though many Lubbers may not care for the ocean, the ocean cares for Lubbers.



## \* Credits

All images are either public domain cliparts or are used with permission such as the FCIT for the use of the dice images: <http://etc.usf.edu/clipart>

The short lyrical sample is from the Beatles Octopus' Garden (Abbey Road, 1969 - please buy this album!).

Thanks to Stelio for running the contest!

~FINIS~

# OCTOPUS' GARDEN

*Player:*                      *Sea-Creature Type:*                      *Creature Name:*

MIND:		<u>NOTES</u>
BODY:		
SPIRIT:		
DAMAGE:		
DURABILITY:		
SPEED:		
SIZE:		
SPECIAL ABILITY:		

# OCTOPUS' GARDEN

*Player:*                      *Sea-Creature Type:*                      *Creature Name:*

MIND:		<u>NOTES</u>
BODY:		
SPIRIT:		
DAMAGE:		
DURABILITY:		
SPEED:		
SIZE:		
SPECIAL ABILITY:		

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