

# Salty Sea Dogs!

*A Simple Playing-Card RPG*

These waters are fraught with danger and excitement. A lesser sailor might be too timid to explore the bountiful islands scattered throughout this sea of fortune. Not you! You are a Sea Dog, a veteran pirate who thrives in situations such as these. Your trusty Captain will guide the adventure as you and your mates discover mysterious lands and claim the treasures you find.

## Setup

You'll need a **deck of playing cards**, some scraps of **paper**, a few **pencils**, 1 **Captain** (he'll be the Narrator), and 1+ **Players**. With more than 3 Players, use an extra deck of cards. Split the group between decks – the Captain draws from the smaller group's deck if they're not the same size.

Each Player makes a **Sea Dog** by writing down a **Name** on a scrap of paper and then choosing a **Trait** from this list: brawny, agile, cunning, charismatic, ruthless, or weathered. When creating characters, remember that the Sea Dogs may bicker but they should be able to get along alright.

When a Sea Dog does something that is **especially fitting of his Trait** then the task is one step easier. This usually only happens once or twice per scene at most. If he tries something that goes against his trait then it is one step harder. The Captain will decide how fitting a trait is to a given task.

At the beginning of each session, the Captain will use the **Island Generation** rules to create the basic situation. The Sea Dogs will do their best to get their hands on the treasure!



## Narration and Story

The **Captain will narrate** the environment and characters around the Sea Dogs. This includes nature, wild beasts, friendly and fiendish characters, crew members, and anything else that is not a Sea Dog himself. In turn, **Players will narrate** the actions of their specific Sea Dogs.

Most of the time, narration alone is sufficient to move the story forward. When a Sea Dog attempts a task that is **dramatic**, will **significantly influence the scene**, and has a chance at **failing in an interesting way**, success is determined by the cards. This means that every hack and slash doesn't need to be checked – several thugs can be taken on at a time with a single check while their leader may require a more focused check.

## Dramatic Tasks

Every Player has a **Hand of 4 cards** at the beginning of each scene. When his Sea Dog attempts a task, the Captain declares a **level of difficulty**: Trivial, Easy, Normal, Hard, or Improbable. A task may simply be Impossible if there is no way the character could achieve it. **Resolve using Playing Cards.**

Note that **only Sea Dogs** use cards to resolve tasks. The Captain determines everything else; however, Sea Dogs will usually get a chance to react to actions that will affect them.

Try to give each Player **equal time in the spotlight**: this responsibility is shared between the Captain and the Players themselves. If a Player is being left out, the Captain should be sure to address them with direction questions.

## Playing Cards

To resolve a task beyond Trivial difficulty (an automatic success), the Player **plays 1 or 2 cards from his Hand**. The Captain **draws 3 cards** from the top of the Deck. **Compare** the sum of the Player's cards (Jacks, Queens, and Kings are 11, 12, and 13 respectively) to the drawn cards to see if the task is successful: an **Easy** task needs to beat the lowest card, a **Normal** task needs to beat the median card, and a **Hard** task needs to beat the high card. An **Improbable** task cannot be achieved without lowering the difficulty and an **Impossible** task simply can't be done.

**Aces and Jokers** are special. They do not count towards the Player's two cards allowed per check. Aces have a value of one when drawn by the Captain. A Player may use an Ace or Joker to make a task one step easier if the task is not already Impossible. If a Joker is one of the three drawn cards, the task is one step harder. Draw a new card to replace the Joker.

If a Player uses more than one card for the check then the Captain will inform him of a **Complication** that will happen – something that will go wrong even on a success. Place all played cards in a **Discard** pile when the check is resolved.

A Player may **play the top card from the Deck** as part of his played cards; however, he may not play another card from his Hand on the same check after using the Deck. If **all** Players' Hands are empty, everyone draws up to a full Hand. **Shuffle** the Discard pile when the Deck is empty.

## Harm and Consequences

**Bad things happen**, especially when a Sea Dog fails at a task. When they do, the effects are **narrative**. If a member of the Imperial Navy slashes a Sea Dog with a saber then that arm is injured or broken. The Captain determines what Consequences are and how long they last. Usually, a Consequence **lasts for the Scene if it is minor or the Session if it is major**. Especially severe Consequences may be even longer lasting. Consequences may be narrative or they may make tasks one step more difficult when the Captain deems the Consequence important.

## Losing a Sea Dog

**Death happens**, too. If it does, that Sea Dog's Player is designated Cabin Boy (or co-Cabin Boy if more Sea Dogs die) and assists the Captain for the rest of the Session. He then creates a new Sea Dog at the beginning of the next Session.



## Captain's Notes

**Failure** should never stall the action – something happens. Maybe the action was partially successful, maybe it went catastrophically wrong, maybe something completely unexpected happened. The point is, the only thing that **does not happen** is *nothing*.

**Complications** from adding cards can be just about anything – the Captain should offer the Sea Dog an option. How far is he willing to go in order to succeed? **What is he willing to lose?** Equipment? Tactical advantage? Physical wellness? Don't be worried if it happens often; the plot moves forward from the success but things get more interesting.

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## Island Generation

At the beginning of each session, the Captain draws 3 cards and uses the card values (in order) to help determine the basic qualities of the island the Sea Dogs will encounter and the adventure to be had there. These qualities are flexible guidelines – the Captain may make changes as he sees fit. Once qualities are chosen, Discard these cards.

Value	Feature	Danger	Treasure	Value	Feature	Danger	Treasure
<b>Ace</b>	Coastal Cliffs	Active Volcano	Cache of Gems and Coins	<b>8</b>	Ghost Town	Rival Pirates	Useful Hideout
<b>2</b>	Thick Jungle	Ominous Tremors	Lavish Rations or Drink	<b>9</b>	Ancient Ruins	Imperial Navy	Title or Reputation
<b>3</b>	Caves and Tunnels	Perilous Waters	Mysterious Artifact	<b>10</b>	Walled Fortress	Cunning Cannibals	Adventuring Gear
<b>4</b>	Hills and Mountains	Impending Storm	Equipment for Ship	<b>J</b>	Smuggler Hideout	Powerful Magician	Ornate Weaponry
<b>5</b>	Mighty River	Deadly Traps	Valuable Information	<b>Q</b>	Port Town	Ancient Curse	Source of Healing
<b>6</b>	Tropical Paradise	Hungry Wildlife	Friends or Allies	<b>K</b>	Hidden City	Ghostly Guardians	Blessing or Prophecy
<b>7</b>	Numerous Wrecks	Mystical Beast	Useful Crew Member	<b>Jr</b>	Draw 2 cards in place	Draw 2 cards in place	Draw 2 cards in place

