

THREE IDEAS BEHIND THE GAME

Does Play Dice
Why it's built the way it is.

ONE • OPEN SOURCE

Nobody can take it back

In January 2023 the publisher of the world's best-known roleplaying game tried to revoke the Open Game License, the agreement a whole industry had built on for twenty years. Does Play Dice is an answer to that. Every word of the rules is published under **Creative Commons Attribution 4.0**: copy it, change it, sell it, build on it. The licence is irrevocable, even by us.

That is what makes a community possible. Experienced players don't have to wait for an official expansion. They can write their own rules, paths, settings and adventures, share them, and let the best ideas spread from table to table. The whole game lives in plain text on GitHub, ready to fork. The only thing you can't take is the name.

FURTHER READING

The Cathedral and the Bazaar Eric S. Raymond, 1999

Why open, many-handed projects beat closed ones.

Free Culture Lawrence Lessig, 2004
Why creativity needs a commons, by a founder of Creative Commons.

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TWO • SIMPLE CORE

Learn it in a minute, grow into it for years

The basic rules fit on **one page**. The Narrator picks three of your five dice, you give one each to Physical, Mental and Social, and when something is hard, you roll against the Narrator. Highest roll wins. A new player can learn that in the time it takes to pour a drink.

Everything else is optional and sits on top: training paths, combat, harm, schools of magic. Every expansion has to keep one promise: **it must work at a table that only knows the one page**. So a first-timer with the one page and a veteran with the full campaign rules can share a table, in the same scene, rolling the same dice.

FURTHER READING

Impro for Storytellers Keith Johnstone, 1999
Improvised stories built on a few simple rules.

A Theory of Fun for Game Design Raph Koster, 2004
Why games are fun while we are still learning them.

Fate Accelerated Edition Evil Hat, 2013
A slim version that plays alongside the full Fate Core.

THREE • COSMOLOGY

The dice are the universe

There are exactly **five Platonic solids**, shapes built from identical regular faces, and Euclid proved there can never be a sixth. Around 360 BC, Plato's *Timaeus* made them the stuff of the world: fire, earth, air and water, with the fifth for the heavens. In 1596 Kepler nested the same five between the orbits of the planets, sure he had found the blueprint of the solar system.

In the world of *Timaeus*, they were right. The five dice on your table are the five elements, the planets and the five schools of magic. When you roll, you aren't simulating the universe. You're running it.

Each die is an element, a school of magic, and a planet in Kepler's model:

 d4 Fire Mars	 d6 Earth Jupiter	 d8 Air Mercury	 d12 Aether Earth	 d20 Water Venus
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FURTHER READING

Timaeus Plato, c. 360 BC
The solids become the elements (sections 53c to 56c).

Mysterium Cosmographicum Johannes Kepler, 1596
In English as *The Secret of the Universe*, trans. A. M. Duncan, 1981.

The Sleepwalkers Arthur Koestler, 1959
Kepler's story, and how a beautiful wrong idea led him to the right ones.