Scoundrel

Overview

Scoundrel is a **single-player roguelike dungeon card game** originally designed by **Zach Gage** and **Kurt Bieg** in 2011. You play as an adventurer exploring a dangerous dungeon, represented by a deck of playing cards. Your objective: **survive the entire dungeon** without your health reaching zero.

The game can be played with a physical deck of cards or right here in your browser. This page covers the complete rules for both versions.

Setup

What You Need

- A standard 52-card deck of playing cards
- Something to track your health (pen and paper, a die, or a phone)

Preparing the Deck

Before playing, **remove the following cards** from the deck:

- All **red face cards**: Jack, Queen, and King of Hearts and Diamonds (6 cards)
- Both **red Aces**: Ace of Hearts and Ace of Diamonds (2 cards)
- Both **Jokers**

This removes 8 cards, leaving you with a **44-card dungeon deck**. Shuffle the remaining cards thoroughly — this is your dungeon.

Starting Health

You begin the game with **20 health points** (on Normal difficulty). Your health can never exceed this maximum.

The Cards

Each card in the dungeon has a specific role based on its suit:

Card Type	Suits	Values	Effect
Monsters	♠ Spades, ♣ Clubs	2–14 (Ace = 14)	Deal damage equal to their value
Weapons	♦ Diamonds	2–10	Reduce damage from monsters
Potions	♥ Hearts	2–10	Restore health equal to their value

Monster values: 2 through 10 are face value. Jack = 11, Queen = 12, King = 13, Ace = 14. Black face cards and Aces remain in the deck, making them the strongest monsters.

Gameplay

The Room

Deal **four cards face up** from the dungeon deck. These four cards represent a "room" in the dungeon. In each room, you must **interact with exactly three cards** — the fourth card remains and carries over to the next room.

After resolving three cards, deal **three new cards** from the deck to bring the room back to four cards. The card you left behind is still there, giving you some control over what you carry forward.

Interacting with Cards

Fighting a Monster

When you choose to face a monster, you have two options:

- **Barehanded:** Take damage equal to the monster's full value. A 12 Monster deals 12 damage.
- **With a weapon:** The weapon's power is subtracted from the monster's strength. You take the remaining difference as damage (minimum 0).

Example You have a 8 Weapon and face a 12 Monster.
Damage taken = 12 − 8 = **4 damage**.
If your weapon was a 14, you'd take **0 damage**.

Equipping a Weapon

Click/tap a weapon card to equip it. If you already have a weapon, the **new weapon replaces the old one**. Your previous weapon (and its kill history) is discarded.

Drinking a Potion

Potions restore health equal to their face value. However, there are two important restrictions:

- You may only drink **one potion per room**. Additional potions in the same room must be left behind or resolved without healing.
- Your health **cannot exceed your maximum** (20 on Normal). A 10 Potion at 18 health only heals 2 points.

Weapon Binding

This is the most important rule to understand. When you use your weapon to defeat a monster, the weapon becomes **"bound"** to that monster's strength level.

After being bound, the weapon can **only be used against monsters of equal or lower strength** than the last monster it defeated. This means:

Example — Good Chaining You have a 10 Weapon.
1. Kill a 13 Monster → weapon bound to 13 (can fight ≤13 next) → take 3 damage
2. Kill a 8 Monster → weapon bound to 8 (can fight ≤8 next) → take 0 damage
3. Kill a 5 Monster → weapon bound to 5 → take 0 damage
Result: 3 monsters killed, only 3 total damage taken!
Example — Bad Chaining You have a 10 Weapon.
1. Kill a 3 Monster → weapon now bound to 3 (can ONLY fight ≤3)
Result: The weapon is nearly useless now. The remaining 11, 12, 13, 14 monsters must be fought barehanded.

Key Takeaway Always use your weapon on the **strongest available monster first**, then work your way down. This maximizes the number of kills you can get from a single weapon.

Avoiding a Room

If you don't like the current room, you can choose to **avoid** it (also called "running"). This puts all four visible cards back into the dungeon deck bottom and deals a fresh room of four cards.

Restriction: You cannot avoid two rooms in a row. If you avoided the previous room, you must face the current one.

Winning & Losing

- **You win** when all cards in the dungeon deck have been resolved — you've cleared the dungeon!
- **You lose** when your health drops to zero or below at any point during the game.

Scoring

If you win, your **remaining health** becomes your score. A perfect score of 20 means you cleared the entire dungeon without taking any net damage — an extremely rare achievement. Most winning runs end with a score between 1 and 10.

Quick Reference

- Start with **20 HP**
- Rooms have **4 cards**, resolve **3**, leave **1**
- Monsters deal their face value as damage
- Weapons absorb damage; become bound after killing
- Potions heal face value; **1 per room**; max HP cap
- Can **avoid 1 room**, not 2 in a row
- **Win:** clear all cards. **Lose:** HP reaches 0
- **Score = remaining HP** after clearing the dungeon

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