Rules for the
PIRATES vs. SKELETONS
dice-rolling game

PIRATES vs. SKELETONS

It's a full moon and skeletons are attacking the pirates while their ship is anchored for the night in Dead Man's Bay.

Description

Pirates vs. Skeletons is a dice-rolling game where skeletons are attacking the pirates while their ship is anchored for the night. The pirates must roll well to stop the skeletons from climbing aboard. The skeletons must roll well to be able to seize the ship.

This game's main mechanic is a dice-rolling competition starting with each player rolling a single die scaling up to scenarios similar to what is used in the board game "Risk", and beyond.

Players have the opportunity to learn early math concepts, like how to recognize numbers, to add numbers, and to determine the greater of two numbers. With the advanced rules, players have the additional opportunities to use the various mathematical operators to compute their rolls, and to consider probabilities when deciding how many pieces to use in a given round.

Ages 4+   **2 players**   **5-10 min.**

What You Need to Play

To play this game you will need to download and print the game board and playing pieces from the PlayGames2Learn.com website: http://playgames2learn.com/printables/

You will also need some dice. 6-sided dice are great to start with, but if you have other dice, like 4-sided or 20-sided, then you can add additional dimensions to the math used in the game.

If you don't have multi-sided dice, you can make your own paper versions using our game dice templates: http://playgames2learn.com/printables/

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Getting Started

The game board is divided into a number of "squares", some on the ship and some in the ocean surrounding the ship. The Pirates start onboard the ship and the Skeletons start in the ocean. To get started, each player must place their pieces as evenly as possible across their starting squares, eg: before putting a second piece in a square, all your starting squares must have at least one piece. Players can have as many pieces in a given square as they can physically place standing upright fully within the square's boundaries.

Note: *First time players may wish to start with some lesser number of pieces; perhaps just one piece per square.*

Taking Turns

Each turn is comprised of two phases: the Fighting Phase and the Moving Phase.

Phase 1: Fighting

Skeletons can attack Pirates that are in any adjacent square. Attacks cannot be made on diagonals. Skeletons <u>must</u> attack if they are able to do so.

Each Skeleton will choose a specific Pirate in an adjacent square to attack and then declare that attack. Since the Skeletons are attacking the Pirates, the Skeletons will decide the order of these attacks. Attacks continue until each Skeleton that can attack has done so.

An attacking Skeleton will roll a 6-sided dice and the defending Pirate will also roll a 6-sided dice. The higher roll wins the fight and the losing piece is removed to that player's graveyard. In the case of a tie, both pieces stay put and survive to the next turn.

Leaders' Bonus – Each side has a piece marked with a star. This is the leader or captain. This piece gains a +1 bonus to each of their rolls.

Phase 2: Moving

After the Fighting Phase is complete, the players may choose to move their surviving pieces. If any Skeleton is adjacent to an empty square or a square occupied by at least one other Skeleton, it may move into that square. Skeletons may move through the ocean or onto the ship – but once on the ship they cannot return to the ocean.

Likewise, once the Skeletons have moved, each Pirate may move to an adjacent square that is empty or occupied by at least one other Pirate. Pirates cannot move into the ocean squares.

Pieces cannot be moved diagonally. Players have the choice of leaving squares empty as they move their pieces. Once the pieces have been moved, the next turn starts.

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Winning

The two players are fighting for control of the Pirates' ship. Whichever player has all of their pieces removed from play has lost the fight and the other player wins.

Additional Rules

Once you are familiar with the basics of the game, you can increase the complexity of play by employing some of these additional rules.

Advanced Fighting Rules

Roll multiple dice to have the pieces in a square attack or defend as a group.

- The attacking player rolls one dice for each of their Skeletons in a given square that are participating in the attack.
- The defending player rolls one dice for each of their Pirates that are actively defending their square for that turn.
- Neither the attacker nor the defender need to use all of their pieces to attack or defend a square in a given turn.

To resolve the fight, the players will match-up their highest rolls, second highest rolls, and so on. The highest roll of each pair of dice wins the fight. This means that multiple pieces from each player may need to be removed to their respective graveyards.

Note: *If one player has rolled less dice than the other, then only that many dice need to be paired up.*

Examples:

- **Same number of attackers as defenders** – In this case all the dice can be paired and the probability of winning any particular pairing is even.
- **More attackers than defenders** – the attacker has an advantage as they will have more chances to get higher rolls than the defender, but at the same time, the defender can only lose the number of pieces equivalent to the number of dice they rolled. Perhaps they are buying time for reinforcements?
- **Less attackers than defenders** – the defender has an advantage this time as they will have more chances to get higher rolls than the attacker, but at the same time, the attacker can only lose the number of pieces equivalent to the number of dice they rolled. Plan your moves carefully. Remember: the Skeletons must attack even if they are outnumbered.

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Choose a Leadership Style

Players may choose to place one of their pieces on any of the four Leadership Styles included on the game board (removing that piece from play). If both players wish to choose a Leadership Style, the player who rolls highest picks first.

The Leadership Styles add an additional ability to the leader:

- **Brute** – the leader adds an additional +1 when calculating their own total roll
- **Lucky** – the leader is able to re-roll any 1's they get on the dice
- **Mastermind** – each turn, the player may move any single piece two squares instead of the usual one
- **Ruthless** – if the leader loses a fight AND they are in a square with another piece, they can remove that piece to the graveyard in order to save themselves

Note: Come up with your own Leadership Styles and test them out to see how they affect gameplay.

Make a Last Stand

If <u>all</u> of one player's remaining pieces occupy a single square AND one of those pieces is the leader, then that player's leader's +1 bonus applies to the rolls of all the pieces. This +1 bonus is lost once the leader is defeated and removed to the graveyard.

Up the Challenge

Increase the challenge of the game further by using different multi-sided dice and different mathematical operations in order to reach the total attack or defense value of the overall roll. For example:

- Use combinations of 4, 6, 8, 10, 12, and 20-sided dice.
- Roll two dice, but instead of adding them, subtract the smaller numerical value from the larger.
- Roll more than one kind of dice and subtract the dice that has fewer sides from the one with more sides. You won't always have a positive number!
- Agree to a multi-operator formula for your dice rolls. Use addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division. See what happens to the range of numbers you can generate.
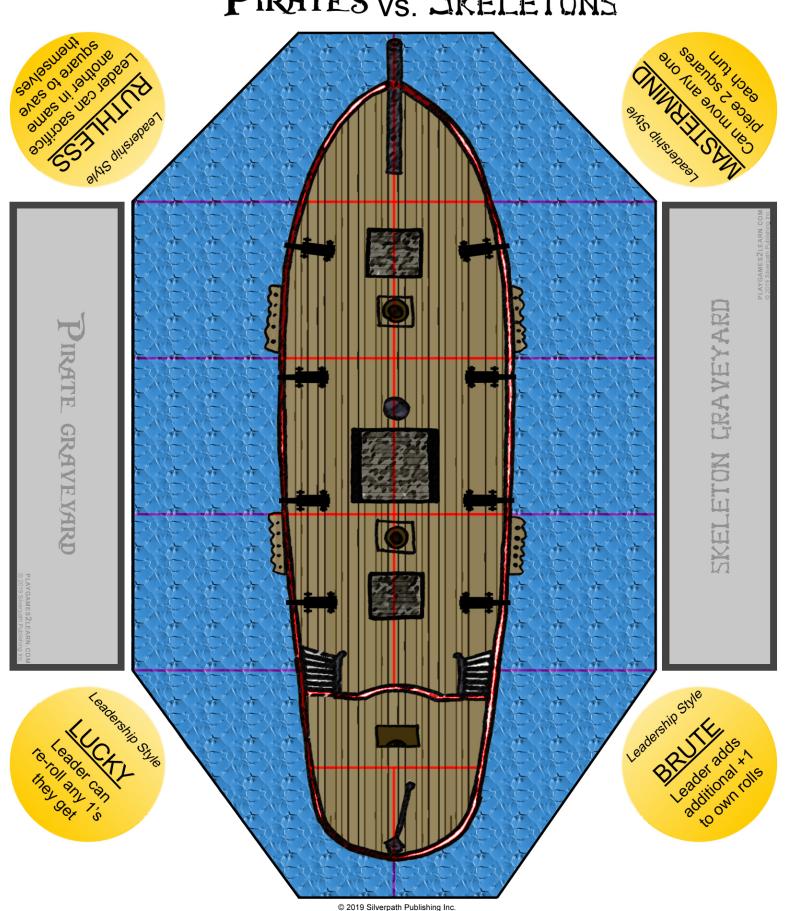
Thanks for Playing!

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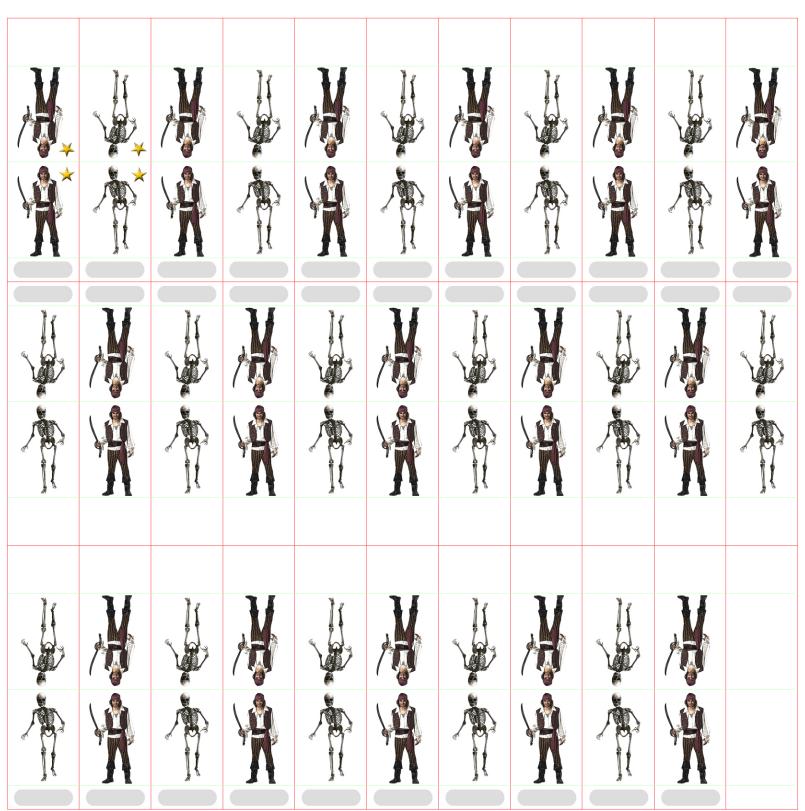more games, activities and printables!

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Game board for the
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PIRATES vs. SKELETONS

Leadership Style
RUTHLESS
Leader can sacrifice
another in same
square to save
themselves

Leadership Style
MASTERMIND
Can move any one
piece 2 squares
each turn

PIRATE GRAVEYARD

SKELETON GRAVEYARD

Leadership Style
LUCKY
Leader can
re-roll any 1's
they get

Leadership Style
BRUTE
Leader adds
additional +1
to own rolls

Game pieces for the
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PIRATES vs. SKELETONS

Instructions: Cut red ⇨ Fold green ⇨ Glue grey