A dicegame by Henning Poehl

The Rats in the Walls

based on a novel by H.P. Lovecraft

A Game for 3 to 6 players, 12 years old or older.

Note: If you combine this with a second copy of the game, up to 12 players can play.

1. Background

This game is based on the eponymous story by H.P. Lovecraft. In the story, the protagonist gradually loses his sanity because he imagines hearing rats in the walls of an old building (this part of the story forms the essence of this game). In the conclusion, the imaginary rats lead the protagonist to a bizarre cave full of gnawed bones. Falling over the body of a companion, he completely loses his mind (this end of the story can occur under certain conditions in the game).

2. Game Materials

- 1 dice cup (the walls)
- 2 stickers (showing the masonry)
- 1 beer coaster
- 5 six-sided wooden dice - each die has a rat on one face and two rats on another face, but the other four faces are blank.
- 1 dice bag
- 30 (plastic) brains
- 6 double-sided summary sheets (with sides A and B)

0-3

Due to small parts not suitable for children under 3 years old.

3. Before the First Game

Stick one sticker showing the masonry onto each side of the dice cup. The dice cup is the walls.

4. Game Setup

Depending on the number of players, each player receives a certain number of brains , which he sets in front of him:

- 3 players: 8 brains
- 4 players: 7 brains
- 5 players: 6 brains
- 6 players: 5 brains

Set the remaining brains aside; they will not be used.

The number of brains you have in front of you indicates your sanity points.

Each player gets a summary sheet.

Place the dice cup, coaster, and the 5 dice in the middle of the table.

5. Determine the Starting Player

The player with the craziest expression is the first player and gets the dice cup. In case everyone is equally crazy, roll the dice to see who goes first. Each player in turn rolls all five dice, and the one with the most rats goes first. If tied, roll-off among the highest rollers, etc.

6. Game Play

Hereafter, the game process will be described in detail. The main flow of the game is summarized on the summary sheet and contains all you need to know for normal play.

Infrequently however, there are special cases that cannot be resolved by the summary sheet. These special cases are described in detail in the rules.

I recommend ignoring these special rules (shaded in gray text passages) when you first read the rules and only refer to them if you are stuck in the course of the game.

a) Begin the round

The player starting the round is called the **Giver**, and the starting player is the first **Giver**. He puts one dice into the dice cup, and closes the cup with the coaster, which shows the cats.

b) Examine the walls

To examine the walls, the **Giver** shakes the dice cup vigorously three times and turns it so that the dice come to rest on the coaster. *(Note: During the game, from 1 to 5 dice will be contained in the wall. For convenience, these rules refer to the dice in plural, even if only one die is in the walls.)*

The **Giver** may, before he passes the dice cup to the next player, carefully peek under the wall so that he (but nobody else) can see the dice result.

Note: The dice must lie next to each other, not stacked on top of each other. If they are stacked, you must declare that they are stacked and then re-roll until they are not stacked.
Upon making the announcement, the other players can request that you reveal the stacked dice.

Then he gives the dice cup to the next player (called the **Receiver**). Alternatively, after peeking and before the handover, the **Giver** can roll again.
However, he may not then peek at the re-roll and must make a "blind" announcement about the number of rats.

*1.1 Special case: If the previous Giver claims that 10 rats are in the wall, then the current Giver cannot increase the number of rats. He now turns the beer coaster over and saying, "The rats have led us into an eerie chamber". The coaster is now oriented so that the 5 dice will come to rest on the next roll on the **skull**-side of the coaster.*

c) The handover
During the handover, make sure that the dice in the cup do not move. The **Giver** tells the **Receiver** how many rats he claims are in the walls. He does not have to tell the truth.

The **Giver** can make two different announcements:

I. There are no rats in the walls.
He can only announce this if he is the first **Giver** of the round or the **previous Giver** has also announced no rats in the walls.
The *summary sheet (side A)* shows the different possibilities that can then proceed.

II. There are at least "X" rats in the walls.
For "X" the **Giver** states a specific number of rats, remembering that each die can only have 2 rats at most.
The *summary sheet (side B)* shows most of the possibilities that can then proceed.

Note:
- During a Round, the first **Giver** to claim that there are rats in the wall loses immediately a sanity point (i.e. a brain) which he lays in the middle of the table.
- If it has been **previously announced** that there are rats in the wall, then upon acceptance you may make two kinds of announcements:
    1. The **Giver** must announce a number of rats at least one higher (compared with the previous **Giver's** announcement) if he has previously peeked under the walls.

1.2 Special case: *If the* **Giver** *turns over the coaster to its* ***skull****-side during his inspection of the wall, he may specify any number of rats (but not zero).*

2. If the **Giver** has conducted no inspection of the walls, then he must announce at least the same number of rats as the **previous Giver** (he can also announce more).

Special Case 2: *If the* **Giver** *has announced a number of rats previously in the round, and his turns comes again, he is not allowed to state the same number again. He must increase the number of rats by at least one.*

Example: *Paul announces that there are at least 3 rats in the walls. All other players believe him and pass the wall further by saying "Yes, one can clearly hear at least 3 rats in the walls." When it is Paul's turn again, and he does not wish to peek under the wall, he says "Well, there are at least 4 rats in the walls."*

d) Accepting the dice cup.
When you are given the dice cup, you must decide if you believe the **Giver** or not.
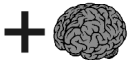
There are two basic possibilities:

I. You believe the Giver.
The exact results are shown on the *summary sheet*.
The round continues (see "e").

II. You don't believe the Giver.
You then peek under the wall that covers the dice that the
Giver has rolled.

Looking under the walls always gives
a brain to the player who is right *(it is
reassuring when things turn out the way
that one believes)*.

But the player who is wrong loses one to
two brains *(it is unsettling when things are
not as you think)*.

The exact results are shown on the *summary sheet*.

The round is now complete (see "f").

*1.3.1 Special case: If the dice lie on the **skull**-side of the
coaster, then the entire game ends. The player who normally
would lose at least one brain, now loses all the brains he still
has, and furthermore, in his insanity, "kills" another player
of his choice.*

e) The round continues

There are two ways that the round can continue (see also the *summary sheet*):

I. **The Giver announces what the previous Giver has announced, unchanged.**
   Warning: This is only allowed if rats are in the walls!
   The **Giver** cannot himself peek under the walls.
   The game continues with a new **handover** (see "c").

II. **The Giver increases the chances of rats.**
   Warning: This is only allowed if less than 5 dice are in the walls!

 The **Giver** adds another dice inside the walls. For this purpose, he turns the cup around so that the coaster is facing up. Then he opens the cup and adds one die.

   Note: *You may never look at the dice that you have accepted hidden from another!*
   If you already have all 5 dice in the cup, then skip adding another die.
   Regardless of whether a die can be added or not, the game continues with a re-**examine** of the walls (see "b").

f) The round is complete
At the end of a round always check to see if game-ending conditions have occurred (see below).
If not, then begin a new round as in "a".
The new starting player is the one who most recently lost some of his brains.

7. The end of the game:
The game ends when a player has lost his last brain.

*1.3.2 Special case: If a player loses his last brain while the coaster is **skull** side up, he goes insane and "kills" a teammate of his choice.*

8. The game winner:
The winner is the "living" player who has the most sanity (i.e. the most number of brains). If there are multiple winners, they win together.

9. Tips:
You can create a foreboding and unsettling atmosphere reveling in madness for example by saying during the handover with a hysterical voice:
"So I know how unbelievable it sounds , ...
But ... there is definitely a rat in this wall ...
... but there could be more! "

10. Explanation of symbols on the summary sheet

Add one dice to the walls if there are less than five dice inside.

The affected player loses one brain if the coaster shows the <u>cats</u>.

*1.3.3 Special case: He loses all his brains if the coaster shows the **skull**.*

The affected player loses two brains when the coaster shows the <u>cats</u>. If he has but one, he loses it.

*1.3.3 Special case: He loses all his brains if the coaster shows the **skull**.*
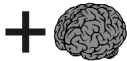
The affected player gains one additional brain.

No rats in the walls.

Rats in the walls.

11. Helpful Mnemonics:

- The **Giver** always wins a brain, if the Receiver does not believe a true statement.
- The **Receiver** always wins a brain when he uncovers a false announcement.
- A **Giver** who is believed that rats are in the walls always wins a brain.
- A **Receiver** who believes that rats are in the walls always loses a brain.

12. Contacts:

© Copyright: Sphinx Games 2013

Illustrations: Markus Buelow
English Translation: Phil Eklund
Designer: Henning Poehl

Sphinx Games
Bachstr. 44, 69221 Dossenheim
www.sphinx-games.com

distribution: Spiel direkt eG
www.spiel-direkt.eu