

The Order of the Stick™

Adventure Game

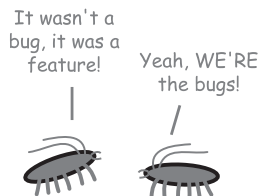
The Shortening

Game Design: Rich Burlew and Kevin Brusky. **Playtesters:** Julie Ritter, Evan J. Morris, Joy Flanagan, Gene Platt, Kevin Nunn. **Special Thanks** to Craig Estep for all of his ideas, support, and help.

Welcome, players, to **The Shortening**, the first expansion for the Order of the Stick Adventure Game. Ever since we released the game in 2005, we've heard one request more than any other: is there a way to play a shorter game?

We designed this game with a mind toward the roleplaying gamers to whom the OOTS comic speaks—as a possible replacement if your GM can't make it, or half the party has the flu. Since roleplaying sessions can last half a day or more, a playing time of 3+ hours was our goal right from the start. We wanted a substantial game that you could sink your teeth into. In the years since we released it, however, we've heard of many people who want to be able to play it in shorter bursts—often as part of a Board Game Night, where four or five different board games will hit the table before everyone goes home. Well, it obviously wasn't designed for that, so that's where this expansion comes in. We've come up with some ideas for getting to the endgame faster without changing the fundamental mechanics of where you go and what you do.

In this deck of cards, you'll find new options for playing a quicker game as well as new cards that help alleviate some of the more common situations that can serve to slow play down. Because, hey, if we're taking the time to fix one thing, we might as well patch a few more, you know?



Variant Rules

Here are a few new variant rules that can help speed up play. You can even use more than one of these at the same time, or combine them with the Backstories or Wandering Xykon options.

In Medias Res: In addition to each player's Starting Shticks, deal each player 3 shticks at random from his or her Shtick Deck. Increase the number of Loot cards dealt to each player from 3 to 6.

No Turning Back: Players cannot go up stairs unless the dungeon is collapsing. If a player loses his last Wound, rather than fleeing the dungeon, they simply drop half of their Loot (determined randomly) in the room they are in and miss their next turn.

Did We Do This Dungeon Already?: Set up the dungeon rooms and stairs as described under Wandering Xykon Setup, below, even if you're not using Wandering Xykon. Xykon's Lair is still explored as normal, but the stairs are already in place and don't need to be found.

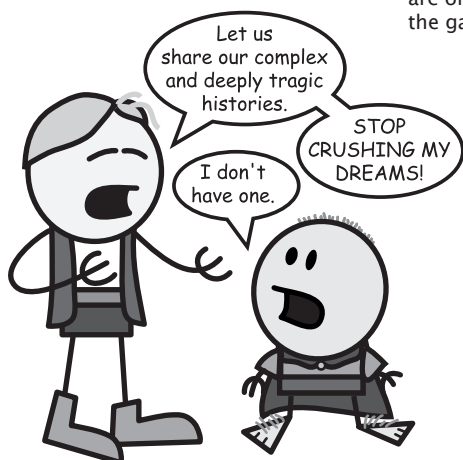
Backstory Cards

Backstory cards are a new class of card that describe the character's outlook, personality, or history. More to the point, each card grants a player an additional secret goal they can try to complete during the game. Completing the goals listed earns additional Bragging Points at the end of the game and provide an alternate means of winning.

Backstory Setup

Backstory cards are always optional, and their use should be decided upon by all players before being introduced.

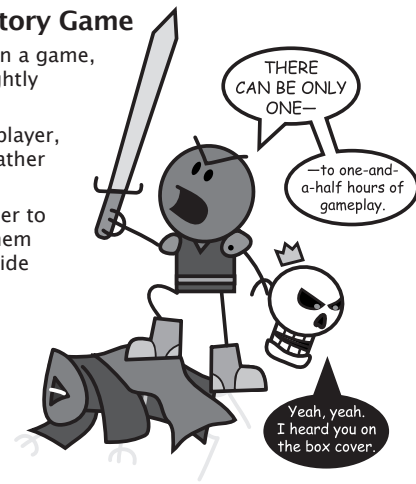
- While setting up the game, shuffle the Backstory Deck and deal 5 cards (face down) to each player immediately after they have chosen their character. Any cards not dealt are placed back into the box without being examined; they will not be used this game.
- Each player examines their Backstory cards and chooses 3 to keep and place, face down, in front of them. The other two cards for each player are placed in a face-up pile next to the Battle Deck. Any player may examine these discarded Backstories at any time during the game.
- Backstories are kept hidden until you have met the conditions for scoring on the card. Some cards are revealed at the end of the turn in which the conditions are met, while others are only revealed at the end of the game.



Saving Monsters in a Backstory Game

When Backstories are being used in a game, the rules for saving Monsters are slightly different than normal.

- When Monsters are defeated by a player, they are saved in a face-up pile, rather than the normal face-down pile.
- When you trade in Monsters in order to draw an additional shtick, place them face down into a separate pile beside your Character Card instead of returning them to the Battle Deck. You must still show the cards to the other players as you do so.
- Monsters saved in either the face-up or face-down pile are counted towards scoring any Backstory that is dependent on the number of Monsters defeated and saved during the game.
- Should the Battle Deck run out of cards and need to be reshuffled during the game, each player must go through their face down saved Monsters and select all Monsters that do not correspond to one of their Backstory cards. These cards are returned to the Battle Deck before it is reshuffled. (It is theoretically possible for someone to deduce what your Backstories are if they kept perfect track of what Monsters you defeated and what Monsters you returned at that point, but it's pretty unlikely since they'll be going through their saved Monsters at the same time.)



Scoring Backstory Cards

Backstory cards allow players to earn additional points toward winning the game by completing objectives based on a personality trait or past event.

- Each Backstory card contains a Bragging Point value, contained in the circle at the top left corner of the card. In order to score the points listed, you must meet the situation described on the card, be it saving as many of a certain type of Monster as you can or bringing about a very specific circumstance during the game.
- Cards with a white number on a blue background can be counted and scored only once, but cards with a blue number on a white background can be scored multiple times, once for every time the conditions listed on the card are met.
- When all players have exited the dungeon and the game ends, each player reveals and scores any Backstory cards they have remaining for which they have met the conditions listed. For example, if the player holds the **Likes Pets** Backstory (which allows them to score 1 Bragging Point for every saved Monster with the **Animal** type), they would reveal the card to all other players and then count up the number of **Animals** they had saved. If they had managed to save 3, they would then score 3 Bragging Points.
- All Bragging Points scored from Backstory cards are added to those gained from Loot, Shticks, killing Xykon, and the order in which you exit the collapsing dungeon. The player with the highest Bragging Point total still wins, as normal.

Backstories and the Timed Game

While Backstories can be introduced to a game of any length, their primary purpose is to allow for a game of a pre-determined (shorter) length by giving players supplemental goals. Due to the reduced likelihood of the dungeon being explored fully and Xykon defeated, Bragging Points from Backstories become significantly more...well, significant.

- In order to play a timed game, all players should agree upon a set playing time before the first turn is taken. Suggested playing times are an hour, an hour and a half, or two hours. Keep in mind that whatever time is chosen will require about fifteen minutes of playing time beyond that in order to complete the game, plus clean-up time.
- Set a timer for the specified time when the first player begins their first turn. When the timer beeps (or boops, or dings, or whatever), the current turn is the last normal turn of the game.
- Players are not allowed to deliberately stall or run the clock out during timed play.
- After the turn on which the timer expires, the dungeon begins collapsing (as if Xykon had just been defeated). All players exit the dungeon as in a normal full-length game.
- If someone actually manages to defeat Xykon within the allotted time, that player gains normal Bragging Points for doing so (and the dungeon collapse begins at that time). Otherwise, no player scores the Bragging Points for defeating Xykon.

Wandering Xykon

Let's face it, Xykon gets bored pretty easily. Sure, he's happy enough kicking back in front of his crystal ball and watching adventurers like you get slaughtered by his unholy minions, but sometimes, he just gets a hankerin' to deliver an old-fashioned smackdown. Especially if he notices some particularly strong heroes who might actually give him a challenge.

The Wandering Xykon rules are a variant method of setting up the game to simulate Xykon getting up off his bony butt and finding you, instead of waiting for you to find him. Using these rules will usually drastically shorten the game by lowering the number of rooms that need to be explored before Xykon can be found and reducing the number of potential supporting cards that will appear with him.

Wandering Xykon Setup

The game is set up as described in the main rules, except as follows:

- Take the Dungeon Room Deck and deal three floors of four rooms each, face down, below the Dungeon Entrance card. The stairs printed on that card must lead to one of the two middle rooms in the row.
- Place a Stairs card between each of the floors of face down Dungeon Room cards and leading down from the third (and lowest) floor, as determined by a random die roll: 1-3, leftmost room; 4-6, left middle room; 7-9, right middle room; 10-12, rightmost room.

- Below the stairs leading from the lowest floor, place the Safe Haven room from the Xykon's Lair deck, face up. Put the other Xykon's Lair cards back in the box; they won't be used.
- Take the Xykon Character Card and the Xykon Wound Tracker card and put them on the table, somewhere between two players or wherever everyone can see it. Put the Xykon Move Token and the five Wandering Xykon cards face up somewhere next to it. Put a clear wound token on the top-most (healthy) spot on Xykon's Character Card.

Player Movement During a Wandering Xykon Game

- Treat moving into a face down room card like moving into an Unexplored Room, except that rather than taking a room from the Dungeon Room Deck, you simply flip over the room that is already in the space.
- You may explore additional rooms on any of the floors of the dungeon by simply moving into an empty space and placing a new Dungeon Room card, as in the full game. Dungeon floors are still limited to having eight rooms total, including the four that each begins with.
- There are no rooms in Xykon's Lair except the Safe Haven. You cannot explore additional rooms to either side of it in a Wandering Xykon game.
- You cannot search for stairs during a Wandering Xykon game.
- The Minimum Shticks and Minimum Loot amounts for entering Xykon's Lair are ignored during a Wandering Xykon game.

Catching Xykon's Attention

- Roll a die at the end of your turn, after all end-of-the-turn actions have been taken. If the result is less than the number of black-bordered shticks (i.e. non-Starting Shticks) you have in play, including those that are flipped or stuck to another player's Character Card, then you have caught Xykon's attention. (Players do not need to roll if they have not earned any black-bordered shticks yet, obviously.)
- If you do not catch Xykon's attention, Xykon spends the turn building his undead army, known as his Minion Stack. If you have any **Undead** Monster cards in your Battle Hand, you must choose one and place it at the bottom of the Minion Stack (below Xykon's Character Card).
- If you do not have any such cards, turn over the top card of the Battle Deck; place it in the Minion Stack as above if it is an Undead Monster. Discard it if it is not.
- The first time any player catches Xykon's attention, place the Xykon Move Token on the Safe Haven room, at the bottom of the dungeon. No more rolls are made to catch Xykon's attention and no more Monsters are played under his Character Card for this game.

Moving Xykon

- Once Xykon's attention has been caught and his Move Token placed on the Safe Haven, Xykon takes a turn immediately after every turn of the player who first caught his attention. After his turn, play continues to the next player.
- On each of his turns, Xykon moves toward the player that is closest to his current room, as measured by the shortest path that he could take. He moves 2 rooms per turn, though he immediately stops moving for the turn if he is in a room with a player (and thus does not move at all if he begins the turn in the same room as a player).
- Xykon can move through face down rooms as if they were face up, and does not reveal rooms that he moves through or in which he ends his movement. He can move up or down stairs as necessary, and can only move between floors of the dungeon via Stairs cards.
- If two or more players are an equal distance from Xykon, he will move toward the one on the deeper floor (even if that is not the floor on which he is currently located). If the two or more players are the same distance from Xykon and all are on the same (lowest) floor, randomly determine which player Xykon moves toward, e.g., roll a die, with even numbers moving Xykon toward Player A and odd numbers moving him toward Player B.
- Xykon ignores you if you are holding the **Xykon Kicked My Ass!** card, if you are fleeing the dungeon, or if you are standing on the Dungeon Entrance; you are not counted when determining who the closest player to him is. Xykon cannot move to the Dungeon Entrance for any reason.
- If Xykon moves through or into any room with a face-up **Goblin** or **Undead** Monster in it, take that Monster from the room and add it to the bottom of Xykon's Minion Stack.
- All of the Monsters in Xykon's Minion Stack count as being in the room in which Xykon is standing, and thus may provide Support to Xykon or any other Monsters on the same dungeon floor. Xykon himself also can provide Support for Monsters that gain Support from **Undead**. The Monsters in the Minion Stack are considered to all be on top of the Monsters in the room for purposes of determining Support.
- If Xykon has only one Wound remaining, he changes his movement pattern. On each of his turns, move him back toward the Safe Haven via the shortest route available, at a rate of three rooms per turn. He may still move into face-down rooms when he does so.



- When Xykon starts a battle on his turn, he is the Attacker and the player is the Defender. Battle is carried out exactly as with any other Monster.
- Once Xykon's Move Token is in the dungeon, you may choose to Attack him on your turn, as you would initiate a Player vs. Player battle. You must be either standing in the same room as his Move Token or have sufficient Range to make a Ranged Attack. If you Attack Xykon on your turn, you must turn in the **Xykon Kicked My Ass!** card immediately.
- Xykon's Attack and Defense values are those printed on his Character Card; due to his Assist ability, he also gains +2 Attack and +2 Defense for every **Undead** either in Xykon's Minion Stack or on the same dungeon floor as Xykon.
- You may use an Area Effect shtick against Xykon and his Minion Stack. When determining targets, treat Xykon himself as the topmost card in the Battle Stack, followed by all of the Monsters in his Minion Stack, and then followed by any Monsters that have been placed normally into the room.
- Xykon retains the Xykon Special ability, as described in the main rulebook.

Wounding Xykon

- Whenever you lose a Wound to Xykon—whether you were the Attacker or the Defender—immediately take the **Xykon Kicked My Ass!** card and place it on your Character Card. If another player is holding the card, take it from them instead.
- Xykon can only lose 1 Wound per battle, regardless of how many Wounds your shtick says a defeated foe should lose.
- If you cause Xykon to lose a Wound, move his Wound token down to the next most wounded picture on his Wound Tracker card and take one of the three **I Hurt Xykon!** cards.
- If you cause Xykon to lose his last Wound, instead take the **I Totally Killed Xykon!** card. Also, after your current turn, the dungeon begins collapsing as described for the full game.
- Whenever Xykon begins his turn in the Safe Haven and there are no other players in the room with him, he heals all Wounds and his Wound marker is moved back to the topmost position on his Wound Tracker. All players must turn in any **I Hurt Xykon!** cards they may be holding, and each player must place one **Undead** Monster card (if they have any) from their Battle Hand into Xykon's Minion Stack.
- Once all Wounds are healed, Xykon resumes moving toward the nearest player on each of his turns.

Ending a Wandering Xykon Game

- Once Xykon is killed, the dungeon begins collapsing as normal.
- Any player who leaves the dungeon with one or more **I Hurt Xykon!** cards earns 1 Bragging Point for every such card. The player holding the **I Totally Killed Xykon!** card earns 3 Bragging Points. Note that it is possible for one player to be holding all four such cards, earning 6 Bragging Points—the same number they would earn for defeating Xykon in a standard three-floor game.

New Shticks

Each of the six Order of the Stick characters from the original Dungeon of Dorukan set have six additional shticks added to their total number. You're welcome. There are two ways to add these shticks to your game; all players should agree on which method to use before play begins.

- **The Kitchen Sink Method:** Add all six of the new shticks into each player's deck. Players may choose the new red-bordered shtick as one of their starting shticks.
- **The Nitpicky Method:** At the start of the game—after players have chosen what characters they are playing and after Backstory cards have been chosen (if they are being used)—each player selects three red-bordered Starting Shticks with which to begin the game. He or she then selects 17 additional shticks to make up their Shtick Deck; these shticks can come from the original Dungeon of Dorukan set or this expansion, and may include any of the remaining red-bordered shticks for that character.

Note that the Nitpicky Method will often increase set-up time as players pore over their shticks to select the best choices (and thus flies in the face of the philosophy of this expansion), but it is included for play groups that have played the game many times and may want to introduce additional strategy into the game.

New Battle Cards

If you are using any of the cards from this expansion, we recommend that you also add all the new Monsters and Screw This! cards included. Just add them all to the Battle Deck and shuffle.

There are 16 new Screw This! cards and 28 new Monsters to add to the deck, including a new Monster type, the Elemental. Several Monsters also have new Special Abilities that help speed up the game by eliminating extra Monsters in play. These abilities are described below.

Charge: This Monster immediately moves to the top of the Battle Stack when played. Subsequent Monsters played into the room are put on the bottom of the stack, as usual. If a second Monster with Charge is played, it moves to the top (and thus in front of the first Monster with Charge).

Exploding: If the Monster takes a Wound, all players and non-Unique Monsters in the same room take 1 Wound immediately. Neither the Exploding Monster nor any of the Monsters who suffer a Wound can be saved by any player.

Encourage: If you defeat this Monster, you may immediately heal all Wounds.

Miser (Support Ability): The Monster drops one additional Loot for every supporting card it has at the moment that it is defeated.

Battling Xykon

- When Xykon ends his movement in a room with one or more players, he Attacks them. Xykon does not start battles with players that are fleeing the dungeon or holding the **Xykon Kicked My Ass!** card. If more than one eligible player is standing in the room, Xykon Attacks the player with the most shticks (or a random player, if both have the same number of shticks).