

COLOSSAL CAVE

THE BOARD GAME



3 or 4 players



20–60 minutes

Designed and adapted by Arthur O'Dwyer

Many thanks to all the Kickstarter backers who pledged money to see this game produced!

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Setting Up

The player who has most recently played a text adventure goes first.

Shuffle the cards and deal three cards to each player; this is your starting *hand*. Put the rest of the cards face down in a *draw pile*. Leave some space nearby for the *discard pile*.

Also leave some space in front of each player. As you collect items and treasures inside the cave, you'll be playing them face-up in front of you. This is your *inventory*, or *carried items*.

Put the board in the middle of the table, where everyone can see the names of the rooms and the connections between them. Each player chooses a player token and places it in the Well House to start.

The Well House is an important location; you'll need to return there to drop off your treasures as you collect them. A treasure in the Well House is safe from the predations of your fellow adventurers. (In addition to housing a small spring of water, it also houses four giant steel safes — enough for each of you to store your treasures safely.) See **Depositing Treasures** on page 7.

Variante: For a quicker game, separate out the treasure cards and add a random treasure to each player's starting hand before shuffling the rest of the treasures back into the draw pile.

On Your Turn

Each of your turns will consist of the following actions, in exactly the following order:

- **Draw one**
 - **Move one**
 - **Play one***
 - **Discard down to seven**
- 
- Play an action or item
 - Draw another card
 - Move another space
 - Deposit a treasure

Draw one means you may draw a card from the draw pile and add it to your hand.

Move one means you may move your player token from your current room to any adjacent room, following the connections on the map; or you can just stay where you are.

Play one means you may play a card from your hand... *but*, if you prefer, you may instead draw an extra card, or move an extra hop on the map, or (in the Well House) deposit a treasure, or do nothing at all. In fact, *whenever* you have to “play a(nother) card,” you may do any one of these things.

Discard down to seven means, if you have more than seven cards in hand at the end of your turn, you must discard until you have only seven. Even if your turn ends prematurely, for example due to being Lost in the Maze, you must still discard down to seven cards before the next player takes his turn.

The Cards

Cards in Colossal Cave come in four types: *item*, *treasure*, *action*, and *reaction*.

Item cards have the word “ITEM” on top in green. They represent items you’ve collected while exploring the cave. To play an item card, you must be in the specific location where that item is playable. For example, the **Black Rod** item card is playable only in the Cobble Crawl. To play an item card, place it face up in front of you. You are now *carrying* that item.

You might have noticed that the **Friendly Bear** is “Playable: Nowhere.” This item can’t be played in the normal way, but can be acquired by other means. Read on.

Some items have side effects, which are explained by the text on the item card itself. For instance, the **Black Rod** scares the **Little Bird**. These effects apply only when the item is being carried, not when it’s merely in your hand. Make sure to read all the effects of each of your items!

Treasure cards have the word “TREASURE” on top in blue. They’re just like item cards — in fact, all *treasures* are by definition also *items*.

Action cards have the word “ACTION” on top in pink. To play one of these cards, show it and do what it says, then put it in the discard pile.

Reaction cards have the word “REACTION” on top in red. Every reaction card’s text starts: “Play out of turn when...” Reaction cards can interrupt another player’s turn; for example, when Alice tries to move from the Well House to the Cobble Crawl, Bob can inform her that **The Grate Is Locked!**

You may play a reaction card even when it is your turn. For example, as you move from Bedquilt to the Volcano View, you might play **Stop! Pay Troll!** on yourself, to get the **Friendly Bear** out of your hand. This is perfectly fine, and *never* uses up your “play one” action for the turn.

Defending Against

Some item cards end with the text “*Defends against...*” For example, the **Friendly Bear** defends against **Stop! Pay Troll!** This means two things. First: If you have the **Friendly Bear** in your inventory, you are immune to the effects of **Stop! Pay Troll!** (The bear scares away the troll.) Second, and more important: If somebody directs **Stop! Pay Troll!** at you while the **Friendly Bear** is *in your hand*, then you can immediately reveal the Bear, put it in front of you, and invoke its protective ability. (The troll is if anything even *more* scared of the bear when it takes him by surprise.)

Revealing an item card this way does *not* count as “playing” the card, so you can ignore the item’s “Playable in:” text, and the revealed card cannot be canceled by **I Don’t Know How to Do That** or **Dwarvish Magazines**.

Acquiring

Some cards tell you to *acquire* an item. This means to find it, no matter where it is in the game, and put it in front of you. Acquiring an item does *not* count as “playing” that item.

When you're looking for the item, check the cards in this order:

- Your own hand.
- Player inventories.
- The discard pile.
- Other players' hands (in whatever order you choose).
Don't actually look at their hands; just ask who's got the card.
- The draw pile. After you look through the draw pile, shuffle it again so you don't know what's coming up.

Do *not* check the treasures that have already been deposited in the Well House, except in the very specific case of **Fee, Fie, Foe, Foo!**

Darkness

There is light to see by in the Well House, and also in the Cobble Crawl (where a dim light filters in through the grate above). However, the rest of the cave is normally in darkness. If you are carrying the **Brass Lantern**, then your location is lit, i.e., not in darkness. This affects everyone in the room with you.

Death and Resurrection

Some cards say that a player “Dies.” Don’t worry, death in Colossal Cave isn’t very permanent. When you Die, do these things:

- Remove your player token from the board.
- Discard your whole hand.
- Discard your carried treasures.

Do *not* discard your carried non-treasure items, and do *not* discard the face-down treasures you’ve already deposited in the Well House.

Until your next turn, you are Dead. Although you are not in any room and your hand is empty, in all other respects you are still in the game. In particular, you can still be affected by **Steal a Keeper**.

At the start of your next turn, you emerge coughing and gasping from a cloud of orange smoke to find yourself... back in the Well House! Place your player token in the Well House and draw a new hand of three cards. (You’ll “draw one” at the start of your turn, too, so that’ll be four cards total.)

Depositing Treasures

If you are in the Well House, and you are carrying a treasure — that is, if you have a treasure face-up in front of you — then when it is time for you to “play a card” you may instead *deposit* that treasure. To deposit the treasure, simply turn it face-down.

This does not count as “playing” the treasure card, so you can’t use **I Don’t Know How to Do That** to keep someone from depositing a treasure.

Remember that depositing a treasure takes up your “play one” action for the turn. If you have two treasures in your inventory, it will usually take you two turns to deposit them both.

Variant: For a quicker game, after you deposit a treasure, draw and reveal cards from the draw pile until you reveal a new treasure card. Put that new treasure card into your hand.

Winning the Game

The first player to deposit three treasures in the Well House wins the game!

F.A.Q.

Can I carry two treasures at once? Can two players occupy the same room at once? Are treasures items? Does moving from B to A count as moving “between” A and B? Can I **Steal a Keeper** from a player who is Dead? — Yes, yes, yes, yes, and yes, respectively.

If Alice tries to steal my **Dwarvish Magazines**, can I discard the Magazines to cancel her **Steal a Keeper** card? — No. But you can still tell her **I Don’t Know How to Do That**.

Alice is discarding the **Friendly Bear** to acquire the **Golden Chain**. Can I use **I Don’t Know How to Do That** to stop her? — No. **I Don’t Know How to Do That** can only cancel the playing of a card, and merely using the effects of a card you’ve already played is not the same thing as playing the card to begin with.

I want to play this treasure in my hand, but I’m already in the right room! Can I “play one” and *then* “move one” after I’ve played it? — No. Moving is optional, but it still has to be done *before* your “play one.”

Does using a Magic Word to “warp” from place to place count as “moving,” for the purposes of reaction cards? — No. The verb “move” refers *only* to moving along the passages marked on the board.

Can I use **Let’s Do That Again** to take an item from the discard pile? — Yes, but you can’t “play it immediately” unless it is, in fact, playable in your current location.

Alice and I are both in the Plover Room, and I have a **Brass Lantern** in my hand. If Bob plays **Bottomless Pit** on Alice, may I reveal my **Brass Lantern** to defend her? — No. You may defend against a card only if you are its intended target.

Can I play **Xyzzy!** when I am not in the Well House nor the Hall of Mists? — Yes. Nothing happens. But if **The Cave Is Closing** is in effect, it still counts as one of your two magic words.

Who is Don Woods? — Don Woods is one of the co-creators of the original *Colossal Cave Adventure*. While working at the Stanford AI Lab in 1976, Don Woods discovered Willie Crowther's computer program *Adventure* and (with Crowther's permission) proceeded to enlarge the cave by a factor of two and stock it with fantasy creatures and magic incantations. The bellowing beanstalk, the troll bridge, the fierce dragon sprawled out on a Persian rug: all these were among Woods' contributions. So it's only natural to consider that, if Don Woods had **Never Existed**, neither would any of the treasures that he added to the game.

This game feels a lot like (*Fluxx/Chrononauts/Back to the Future*). — Yes, it does. That was one of the design goals... and it's also the only reason that **Dwarvish Magazines** works the way it does in the FAQ on the preceding page: because that's how the "memo" items in *Back to the Future* work, and it would have been confusing to do it differently.

Can we play with 5 or 6 players? — I wouldn't recommend it. There are only 15 treasures in the game; the more players you have, the quicker the "easy" treasures will get soaked up and the harder it will be for anybody to collect three of them. But there is already an expansion, *Colossal Cave 550*, which supports up to six players at once!

Colossal Cave: The Board Game is a board game adaptation of the computer text adventure *Adventure*, also known as *Colossal Cave Adventure*, written between 1972 and 1976 by Willie Crowther and Don Woods. *Adventure* is generally considered to be in the public domain, and has been imitated, expanded, and reskinned literally hundreds of times since its first appearance on a PDP-10 mainframe at the Stanford AI Lab.

This board game is not endorsed by Will Crowther, Don Woods, or anybody else associated with the original *Adventure*.

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