

Eldritch Express

Game Rules

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Introduction

This game is an express dice game adaptation of Eldritch Horror similar to the Arkham Express dice game. It borrows ideas from Eldritch Horror, Arkham Horror, Arkham Express and Elder Sign. The goal is to make a short and small game that could fit into a small fantasy flight expansion box. The game is not yet perfectly balanced, but it is working pretty well. A printable minimal prototype is available for playtesting.

Nb of players: From 1 to 4 players

Play time: 60 minutes.

Components

Here is the current list of components of the game.

1 World Map: A board split in 6 sections, numbered 1 to 6, represented as a 2x3 square grid. Each section contains a city and an expedition location, .

1 Omen Clock: The same omen clock like in Eldritch Horror but used like in Elder Sign. Also contains the lost in time and space area.

12 Character Sheet: Each character has a max Health/Sanity, and a knowledge and skill special ability. They also have starting assets and area, encounter, basic damage. Unused characters can also be used as allies, in that case only the bottom part (Skill + basic damage) is used.

12 Character Marker: Used as a pawn to keep track of player location, delayed investigators are flipped.

6 Ancient one Sheet: Explains what happens on red sun omen, what eldritch tokens do, what are the threshold effects and the results of success and failure when solving mysteries.

5 Action Dice: Special dice that hold 6 different face icons: Travel, Investigation, Research, Rest, Horror, Wound.

2 Mythos dice: Regular D6 of 2 different colors (Yellow = Gate, Green = Clue).

24 Clue tokens: Green bingo chips does the job pretty well, else print and cut clue tokens.

6 Gate token: Contains an encounter on front and the back has an elder sign symbol.

6 Eldritch token: Encounter on the front and tentacles on the back.

1 Expedition token: Marker token like a red bingo chip.

1 Doom Track marker: Keep progress of doom track. Doublesided to keep track of threshold.

1 Omen marker: Keep progress of the omen. Doublesided to keep track of threshold.

1 Elder sign marker: Keep progress of players.

4 Red Health Die: Keep track of character health, could also use red bingo chips.

4 Blue Sanity Die: Keep track of character sanity, could also use blue bingo chips.

28 Item cards: Name, category and effect of the item.

24 Spell cards: Name, category and effect of the spell.

12 Artifact cards: Name, category and effect of the artifact.

26 Condition cards: Name, category and effect of the condition.

36 Monster tokens: Contains name, special ability, Horror, Strength, Toughness and Resistances.

Setup

1-Omen Clock: Set the omen clock marker on the green comet.

2-Shuffle Decks and Tokens: Shuffle all deck of cards in 4 different stacks (items, spells, artifacts, conditions). Do not shuffle “blessed” effects in the condition deck. Eldritch, Gate and monster tokens are shuffled and kept face down. Monsters can be drawn from a cup for convenience.

3-Spawn a gate: Roll 1 d 6 and place a gate on the matching location. Add 2 random monster to the same location.

4-Spawn a clue: Roll 1 D6, place a clue in the area of the world matching that number.

5-Spawn expedition: Roll 1D6, place the expedition token in the target location of the board.

6-Investigation: Players choose investigator, place health and sanity die on their maximum value and collect initial assets: Items and spells. Place investigator on the starting area. Sometimes specific item or spell types are required (ex: Item-Weapon) in that case, continue to draw until you find a matching card.

7-Ancient one: Choose an ancient randomly, set the doom track marker on 9, Place the elder sign marker on the same value.

8-Starting Player: Select the first player randomly.

Game Play

Each player plays one at a time until they win or lose the game in clockwise order. The player wins if the number of elder sign reaches 0 and they fails if the doom track reaches 0.

Turn order Summary

- 1- Upkeep
- 2- Assignment
- 3- Fight Monsters
- 4- Roll the action dice
- 5- Resolve Threat
- 6- Resolve Encounter
- 7- Rest
- 8- Collect Clues
- 9- Move Investigator
- 10- Advance omen clock and resolve the effect

1. Upkeep and Assignment

If you are delayed (even in lost in time and space), flip the investigator token face up, lose your turn and skip to the next player.

If you are lost in time and space undelayed, roll 1D6 and move to the location indicated by the roll.

You refresh all your exhausted spells. If you assign your character to a city on the next step, you may refresh any exhaustable item cards that were previously used.

2. Assignment: The player can assign his character to any of the encounter located in his new area, or assign his character to the city of his region. This will determine what the the action dice will be used for. Players have access to city encounters in all areas, while expedition, gates and eldritch requires the corresponding token to be present. As for characters, there needs to be a defeated character in the area.

You can decide to hide if there is no monster with the hunter ability. In that case, you will lose your turn, but you will not encounter any monsters. If you hide, skip to the next player.

3. Fight Monsters

If there are any monsters in the area you are located, you need to face each of them before proceeding. You will face all monsters at the same time.

You can use all your weapons for the battle. If you have no weapon, you can only get the basic combat strength of your character and your ally (1 point of physical or magical damage). Some weapons are discarded after use, some are exhausted while others can be used indefinitely. You are never forced to use all your weapon.

You may spend 1 sanity to cast a spell. Some spells act as a weapon but making magical damage instead. Some spells have special effects instead and are not used in battles. Spells last for the whole turn, they may be cast at any time and can be cast on other players in the same area.

Then battle is resolved this way:

1- Lose sanity: Sum up the horror of all monsters and lose that many sanity. If you get 2 or more sanity loss you may want to exchange it for a madness. Allies may also be sacrificed. (see other rules).

2- Apply damage: Distribute all your physical damage or magical damage on the monsters. You need to inflict as much damage as its toughness to destroy it. Destroyed monsters are put the monster back into the pool. Damage inflicted on monsters is “healed” at the end of your turn.

Certain monster has physical and magical resistance. It means that the first points of damages of the matching type (physical/magical) inflicted on the target is ignored, and then it takes regular damage. Monsters with the value “A” (All) are simply immune to all that type of damage.

3- Lose Health: Then sum up the strength of all monsters and inflict that much damage on the character health. Again, it is possible to exchange 2+ health loss for an injury. Allies may also be sacrificed.

4. Rolling Dice

In that phase, you roll the 5 special dices. There are 6 different faces on the dice:

- Travel: Used for movement or shipping items, clues, spells, etc.
- Rest: Used to recover health, sanity and remove conditions
- Investigation: Used to resolve encounter
- Research: Used to resolve encounters
- Threat – Wound: Bad hazards that makes you lose health
- Threat – Horror: Bad hazards that makes you lose sanity

The dice rolling follow these rules :

- After rolling, you must set aside at least 1 die and then reroll the rest.
- You must set aside at least 1 Threat roll if some are available.
- You can perform a maximum of 3 rolls (or 2 rerolls). Place dice set aside as a column to remember the number of rolls you have made.

When all rolls are done

- Players can use their characters their Skill ability to modify their roll. Skill of allies can also be used used to change the results of the dice.
- Some artifact could allow dice manipulations.

Blessings and Curses: Characters can get blessed or cursed. This changes the rules for rolling the dices as follow:

Bless

- You are not forced to set aside a threath die, and you can reroll them.
- You can roll until all your dice are set aside. So a maximum of 5 rolls (4 re-rolls).

Curse

- You must set aside all your threath dice.
- You can roll dice only twice (1 re-roll).

5. Resolve Threath

For each wound threath you roll, you lose 1 health. For each 1 horror threath you roll, you lose 1 sanity. You lose nothing if you are located in a city. If you lose 2+ or more health or sanity, you may take an Injury or Madness instead of losing health or sanity. Allies may also be sacrificed. See other rules section.

6. Resolve encounter

Encounters have a difficulty level, a investigation and research value. For example, the Grand Canyon has a difficulty level of 8, investigation rolls gives 3 points and research rolls gives 2 points. You may spend clue tokens to increase your success level by 1 point per token. If the total is equal or higher to the difficulty, the investigator succeeds. Else the investigator fail. The results depends on the type of encouter

Gates: If you pass, you close the gate. Flip the gate on it back side to indicate it is now sealed and increase the progress the elder sign by 1. If you fail you gain a condition, get a lost in time and space condition and get delayed.

Expedition: If you pass you gain an artifact, if you fail you get a condition. Roll the new location of the expedition which cannot be the current location.

Mystery: When eldritch tokens are placed on the board by the ancient one, it creates a mystery that can be resolved. Success removes the token and progress the elder sign by 1, failure results is specified on the ancient one.

Defeated Investigator: If it is a success, elder sign progress increases by 1 and player recover that investigator's assets. Else all assets are discarded (Allies remains alive). In both situations, character is removed from the game.

Cities: They are resolved differently than the encounters above since there is no difficulty level. Look at the following tables to see the rewards and their cost.

List of Rewards and Penalty type for each kind of encounter.

<i>Type</i>	<i>Pass</i>	<i>Fail</i>	<i>Other</i>
Gate	Close Gate Elder Sign Progress by 1	Lost in Time & Space, Condition, Delayed	Gate is flipped to indicate it is sealed
Expedition	Artifact	Condition	Change expedition
Mystery	Elder Sign Progress by 1	Listed on Ancient	
Defeated Investigator	Elder Sign progress by 1. Recover Assets	Discard assets	Remove investigator

List of effects that can be purchased during city encounters

<i>Name</i>	<i>Cost</i>	<i>Effect</i>
Item	2 investigation	Draw an item card
Spell	2 research	Draw a spell card
Ally	3 investigation or 3 research	Gain an ally
Cure	3 rest	Remove injury or madness

7. Rest

Each rest roll can make you recover 1 health OR 1 sanity. When in a city, each roll makes you recover a 1 health AND 1 sanity.

8. Collect Clues

For each *unused* investigation or research roll, you may collect a clue in the area even if you failed the encounter.

9. Move investigator

You may move a number of region in the world octogonally equal to the number of travel rolls. You may send an item, spell, artifact or clues to another character anywhere on the board by spending travel rolls. 1 roll must be spent for each item, spell, artifact or pair of clues.

10. Advance omen clock and resolve effects

You advance the omen clock by 1 step and resolve the effect of the new omen:

Green Comet: Advance doom track by 1. If the doom track reaches 0, the player loses the game.

Blue Zig Zag: Roll the mythos dice. The first die will indicate the location where a gate is spawned with 2 random monster. If there is already a gate in that location, 2 new monster are spawned instead. If there is a sealed gate at that location, the gate token is removed and no monsters are spawned. The second die will indicate the location where the clue appears. Place a clue token on that location.

Flying monsters: Flying monsters already in play will move west 1 space if located in the north hemisphere of the board while monsters in the south hemisphere will move east 1 space if there are no investigator on their current space.

Red Sun: Check the ancient one sheet for the effect effects. Normally it places an eldritch token in a random area that currently has no eldritch tokens.

Threshold: Something special can occur when 6 gates or 6 eldritch tokens are all on the board. Check the ancient one sheet for the details, but most of the time, filling the board with the tokens above will each increase the doom track by 1. This can be done once per game, so the doom track marker and the omen marker can be flipped to keep track that the threshold has already been triggered.

Other Rules

Those are additional rules where many are common to most lovecraft games.

Delayed investigator: An investigator that get delayed, is flipped face down on the board. He will lose this next turn.

Defeated investigator: If a player lose all their health or sanity, they are placed on the board face down on the board and they flip their investigator sheet. Place all possession on the sheet and set the investigator aside. The elder sign track regress by 1. The player choses a new investigator and place it on the board with his starting assets.

When investigator or allies dies, they are removed from the game. So if a defeated player has no more investigators available, the players can take another player's ally, else he cannot get back in the game. So think twice before sacrificing allies.

Conditions: Condition cards will have nasty effects on the character in addition to reducing the maximum health or sanity of the character by 1 point. They remain on the character until death or cure. If you draw a condition you already have, discard it and draw another one. A boon condition will cancel a bane condition and vice versa. You could be asked to draw a type of condition like madness or injury, in that case, draw cards until you find a matching condition. Curing a condition will increase the maximum health/sanity, but it will not recover any points losts.

Wound and condition substitution: When a character receives 2 or more health or sanity loss, he may trade all loses for an injury condition or all sanity loss for a madness condition. This is likely to occur in battles or on very bad encounter rolls. If a player has all 3 madness or 3 injuries injuries, he cannot use this ability since there will be no valid condition. Allies may also be sacrificed to ignore sanity/health losses from Threat and Monsters. Simply remove the ally from the game.

Items: They are mostly weapons that will increase combat strength in combat. Some items are expandable (one time use), some are exhaustable (rechargeable) while other are permanent bonus. Rechargeable items can be replenished the next time you the investigator is assigned to a city.

Spells: A spell is cast by spending 1 sanity point. It can be cast on yourself or any other investigator in the same area even when it's not your turn. Exhaust the spell since each spell can be cast once per turn. If you draw a spell you already have, draw another spell. You may never hold 2 copies of the same spell.

Artifact: These are powerful items with special unique abilities that can be found in expeditions.

Allies: They are non played characters that could assist you. You get access to their skill and their basic damage. You can only have 1 ally at a time, if you get a new ally, you may chose to replace the once you already have. The old one is discarded but not removed from the game as it is still alive. Allies may be sacrificed to soak horror or wounds received, in that case they die immediately what ever the amount of damage received and are removed from the game.

Clues: Any effect that makes clues appear on the board can be done by rolling a D6 and placing it into the target location. Clue tokens can be spent in various ways.

- You can first increase the success level of an encounter by 1 point for each clue spent.
- You can avoid a monster by spending a clue in the combat phase.
- You can spend a clue to reroll any amount of action dice even those set aside.

Devoured: When a character or ally is devoured it is removed from the game. Devoured characters does not remain on the board for character encounters. Devoured characters will make the elder sign regress by 1 as normal defeat, and make it impossible to recover it back.

Monster Abilities: They are keywords on the monster tile that modifies how the monster is encountered.

Hunter (Eye Icon): If there is a monster with that ability in a stack, characters cannot use the hide action. All monsters must be faced. Still clues may be spent to avoid that particular monster, but the rest of the stack must still be faced.

Flying (Wing Icon): Those monsters will move during the blue zig zag step of the omen track if there is no investigator in their current location. Monsters in the north move left, while those in the south move right,

Ambush (Exclamation Icon): Those monsters inflict physical damage after their horror but before character can attack. Monsters cannot be avoided by spending a clue since they ambushed you.

Monster Special Attacks/Resistance: Some monsters will have a letter instead of a number as sanity or health damage. This indicates that it's a special ability with the following effects.

D- Delay: The investigator lose it's turn and becomes delayed instead of receiving damage. It cannot resolve the encounter.

L- Lost in Time & Space: The investigator become delayed and is moved in the lost in time and space location. The character cannot finish the encounter.

C- Curse: Gives the investigator a cursed condition instead of receiving damage.

A- All: This is used for physical and magickal resistance. It indicates that all damage of that type is ignored.

Variant Rules

Here are a couple of variations I have found so far, feel free to make suggestions:

More dramatic threshold: When a threshold is reached, the doom track progress by 2 points instead of 1. You can also make the player lose the game automatically if one or both threshold has been reached.

Monster Trophies: When defeating monsters, you acquire them as trophies. For each 4 points of toughness of monsters defeated, you **MUST** discard them and gain a clue token. If you have 3 or less points, you keep them until you get 4 or more points. It's also your choice to decide if the ancient one **Ghatanothoa** will apply its eldritch effect on those acquired clues.

Permanent Guns: You can remove the need to refresh fire arms weapon items in cities and make them always available.

Systematic Flying Monsters: Flying monsters will always move regardless of if there is a character or not in its current area.
