

REVIEW: D&D – BEDLAM IN NEVERWINTER

[by Justin Alexander – January 7th, 2024](#)



[Bedlam in Neverwinter](#) is a D&D-themed escape room board game for 2-6 players.

Which is a lot of stuff for designers George Feledichuk, David “Duvey” Rudow, and Leo Taylor to cram into one box.

If you’re not familiar with the escape room board game genre, the basic format is a box filled with hidden cards and sealed containers or envelopes. Players are presented with a series of puzzles, and the solution to each puzzle will indicate which card to draw or sealed box to open in order to find the next puzzle.

In the case of *Bedlam in Neverwinter*, this primarily takes the form of a **card deck** and **map boards**. Each card has a three-digit number on the back. The map boards, on the other hand, depict different locations that the players can explore, each labeled with a three-digit number which indicates which card to draw when you go there. In addition to advancing the narrative of the story, each card may also include instructions (to draw additional cards, for example) or a puzzle (the solution of which will be a three-digit number indicating which card to draw).

If you’re not familiar with D&D, then... Wait. Really?

In any case, D&D is a fantasy roleplaying game in which players create characters by selecting their race, class, and ability scores. The actions taken by these characters are resolved by rolling a 20-sided die, adding a bonus from a relevant ability score, and comparing the result to a target number. There’s also a combat system in which damage is tracked and characters die if they lose all of their hit points.

All of these elements are also found in *Bedlam in Neverwinter*, albeit in a heavily modified form: Players will create their **characters** by selecting from a familiar range of **races** and **classes**, each of which will grant them proficiency in one of the six **ability scores**. Each class also has a unique, themed **skill/power** and will gain additional abilities as they level up at the end of each adventure.

Various cards will require either **solo checks** (which the current player rolls) or **group checks** (everyone rolls and at least half the group must succeed). Each check has one or two ability scores associated with it, and if you have a matching ability score you add +1d6 to your d20 roll.

Combat is resolved via round-robin skill checks against the monster's target number. Weapons and other items can be equipped, granting additional bonuses if your attack roll is high enough. (For example, if you roll 17+ with a Sword of Sharpness, you deal +1 damage.)

And that's basically it: *Bedlam in Neverwinter* consists of three adventures, each with a separate deck of cards and map boards. As you play through each deck, you'll discover and overcome puzzles and monsters. The box states that each adventure takes about 90 minutes, but our experience was closer to 2 hours. (But we did have an ultra-excited 7-year-old playing with us, which may have prolonged things a bit.)

IMPRESSIONS

There will be **ONE MINOR SPOILER** in the discussion that follows. It will have no impact or insight into the puzzles or other hidden secrets of the game, but you have been warned.

My overall takeaway from *Bedlam in Neverwinter* is that it's an extremely easy game. The box lists a difficulty of 4 out of 5, but at no point did the group I was playing with feel remotely challenged: The puzzles were all trivially dispatched and the combat never once made us feel in danger for our lives.

As a result, it really felt more like an activity than a game. I mentioned that we played it with a fairly young child, and that may be an ideal use case: A pleasant way to pass some time with your friends and/or family. We certainly enjoyed it as such.

The biggest question I have about the game is why, if it's called *Bedlam in Neverwinter*, is the entire story set in Icewind Dale? It's quite baffling, honestly. My best guess — and it's just a wild guess — is that somebody said, "Don't we have a movie coming out in 2023 that's set in Neverwinter?" and a few references to Neverwinter were shoved in and a new title pasted on the cover.

(I'm not going to get more specific than this because, again, I'm trying to avoid spoilers. But it's very baffling.)

Bedlam in Neverwinter's biggest flaw, however, is the map boards. As I mentioned before, the idea is that you put a map board on the table and then each player chooses where they want to explore, places their miniature there, and reads the associated card describing what they find. Unfortunately, the illustrations on the map boards don't match the card descriptions. The first sentence on a card will be something like, "This body appears to have been..." and you'll look back to the map board in confusion because there's nobody there.

The first few times this happens, you may think you've made a mistake, but you haven't. The bigger problem, however, is that this failure is so pervasive that selecting map board locations is basically just random noise. Other decisions make this even worse. For example, there's one map where a clearly Dexterity-based activity is depicted. So you send the Dexterity-proficient character and... ha! ha! Nope! The skill check here is a Charisma-based check where you *encourage* the most dexterous character in your group to do the activity. (The most dexterous character does not actually contribute to the check in any way.)

I'm not certain if this sort of thing was a deliberate bait-and-switch or just more bad design, but either way what could have been — and arguably should have been — the most significant interactive element in the game is needlessly rendered meaningless.

Like the rest of the escape room genre, once you've played through the content once, you'll be done with the game forever.

Which, ultimately, brings us back to what I said before: The game basically plays itself, but the activities along the way are a pleasant way of passing the time.

You'll want to keep in mind, though, that like other escape room board games, *Bedlam in Neverwinter* is not designed to be replayed: You'll play this once and then never again. (Unlike some games of its type, however, *Bedlam in Neverwinter* is not destructive, so you could reseal the envelopes and pass it along to someone else easily enough.) You'll want to keep that in mind when deciding whether or not to grab a copy.