Documentation to Conquer the Dungeon

Wikimedia Hackathon 2022

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What we'll discuss

- Challenges of technical documentation for Wikimedia projects
- Rewards of improving our docs
- Tools and strategies that can empower us
- How we can support each other and have fun together
- Ideas for focusing your contributions

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Why join?

Your input and participation in this discussion will:

- Help define and direct our technical documentation efforts.

- Help technical writers and WMF identify ways to support and enable everyone's documentation contributions.

- Build connection and empathy with others who share your documentation interests and struggles.

- Discover opportunities for collaboration!

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How we'll discuss it

- Discussion prompts for each topic
- Each topic has its own Etherpad
- Participate verbally in the Jitsi call or write your thoughts in the Etherpad(s)
- Verbal discussion points will be added to Etherpad by a helpful scribe
- Discussion points will be aggregated and posted on-wiki after the Hackathon

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What we'll discuss

technical documentation:

- wiki pages about technical topics
- tutorials in PAWS notebooks
- API docs
- bug reports
- README files
- code samples
- code comments
- ...

dungeon:

- In gaming, a dungeon is usually an area like a castle, cave system, or labyrinth.
- Dungeons contain many branching paths and dark corners that hide traps or monsters (or treasure!).

Dungeon crawl

This article is about a scenario. For the roguelike computer game, see [Dungeon Crawl Stone Soup](#).

A **dungeon crawl** is a type of scenario in [fantasy](#) [role-playing games](#) in which heroes navigate a [labyrinth](#) environment (a "[dungeon](#)"), battling various monsters, avoiding traps, solving puzzles, and looting any treasure they may find.[1] [Video games](#) and [board games](#) which predominantly feature dungeon crawl elements are considered to be a [genre](#).[1][2][3]

> **Contents** [show]

Board games   [edit source]

Dungeon crawling in board games dates to 1975, when Gary Gygax introduced *Solo Dunge...* year also saw the release of *Dunge...* many games build on that concept.[...] acclaimed board games of the late 1...
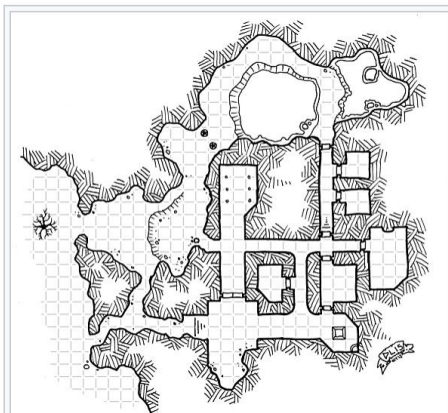
Role-playing game

Not to be confused with other forms of [role-playing](#).

A **role-playing game** (sometimes spelled **roleplaying game**;[1][2] abbreviated **RPG**) is a game in which players assume the roles of [characters](#) in a fictional [setting](#). Players take responsibility for acting out these roles within a narrative, either through literal acting or through a process of structured decision-making regarding character development.[3] Actions taken within many games succeed or fail according to a formal [system of rules and guidelines](#).[4]

Part of a series on
Role-playing games

Improving docs is like an RPG?

We're exploring unknown territory and facing challenges as a group.

We all have different skills, interests, and experience. We need each other to succeed.

We're writing our story together as we progress. No one is in charge. We can have fun and be creative!
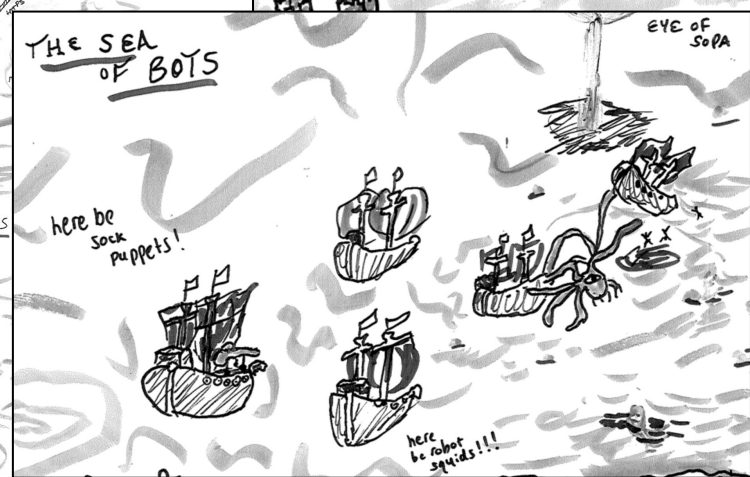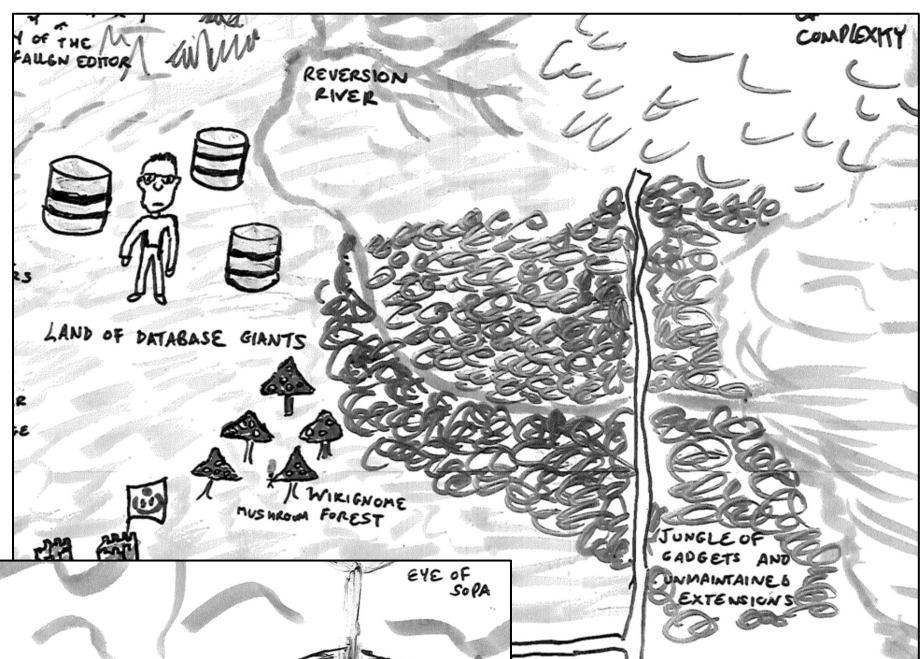
The World of Wikipedia

Welcome, heroes

> In this dungeon you will encounter many terrors, but also
> great rewards.

> Technical documentation will light the way for your party,
> and for adventurers that follow.

> Your first challenge is to illuminate the…

>
>   Torches of Documentation

> But it will not be easy…

maybe the giant frog writes great docs?

Monsters, traps, and puzzles

You feel a surge of power! The magic dart hits the goblin.
You kill the goblin!
A bat comes into view.
Found a scroll labeled THRIEL GHILEPS.
A giant frog comes into view.
_Unknown command.

What makes documentation hard?

Consider documentation challenges that are:

- Structural
- Social
- Personal
- Technical

[… the party discusses amongst themselves …]

Etherpad link: challenges

Rewards and treasure

What motivates us, and what do we hope to achieve?

Consider:
- Structural
- Social
- Personal
- Technical

`[ … the party discusses amongst themselves …  ]`

Etherpad link: Benefits

Items in our backpack

What resources do we have?

Consider:
● People and knowledge
● Technology and tools
● Existing content
● Time?

`[ … the party discusses amongst themselves …  ]`

Etherpad link: Resources and tools
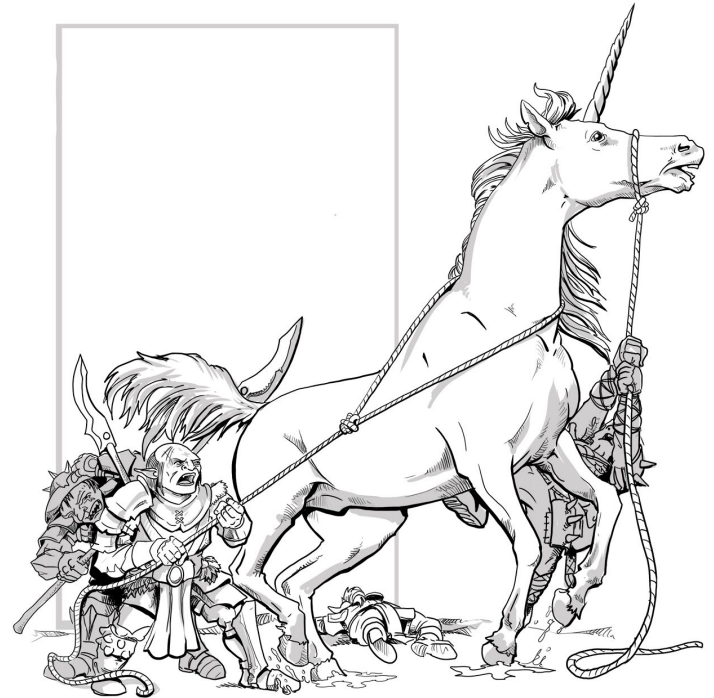
What strategies might we use?

Illustration: CC1.0 by LadyofHats

Consider:
- Focusing deep vs. wide
- Teaching vs. doing
- Adding vs. subtracting
- Ways to divide work
- Processes & transparency

[… the party discusses amongst themselves …]

Etherpad link: Strategies

Healing potions and power-ups

You now have stormfruit.
You now have seed of stormvine.
You now have dreamfruit.
You defeated gnoll scout.
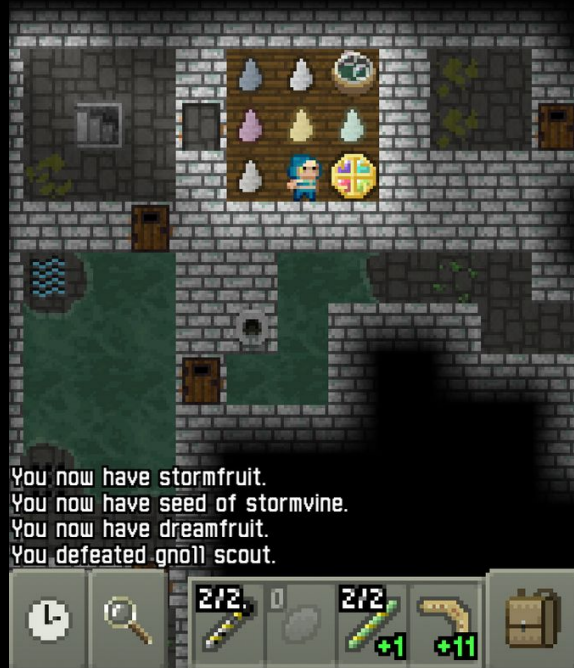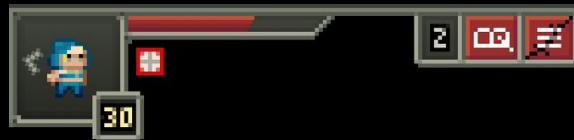
What helps us when it's difficult?
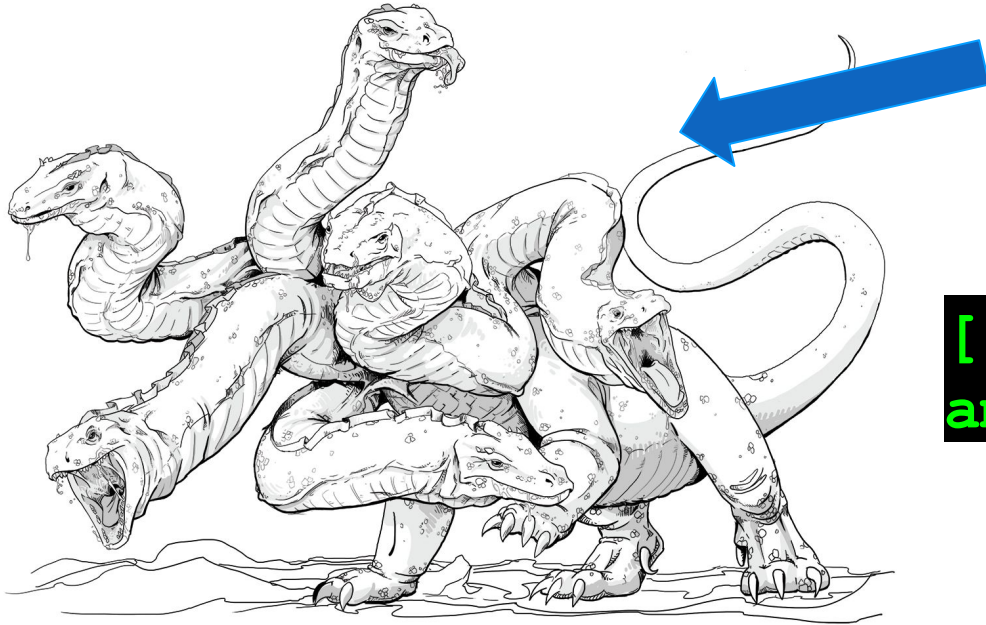
This is you when you're frustrated, disheartened, or confused about writing documentation.

```
[ … the party discusses
amongst  themselves  …    ]
```

Etherpad link:Support

What type of hero are you?

Select Your Hero

WARRIOR   MAGE

ROGUE   HUNTRESS

New Game

Doc contributor character classes

Scout

You're not scared to crawl through the darkness and identify the safest paths for the rest of the party to follow. You are a keen observer and can describe for your party all the monsters and magic that lurk in the darkness.

Warrior

Your thirst for knowledge about monsters and magic is insatiable. You want to understand them so you can help others conquer them. You prefer to fight one monster at a time – you want to be sure they're thoroughly conquered before you move on to the next one.

Rogue

You want to deploy your attacks at targets that have already been identified – you don't want to fumble around in the dark. You're more likely to strike multiple monsters with many simultaneous attacks than you are to focus all your effort on one target.

Mage

You have no patience for old-fashioned weapons. You possess the Magic of Software Development, and you deploy it to ease the path for adventurers who will visit this dungeon after you.

Documentation scouts

- You're okay with process.
- You like providing clarity and direction to help others.
- You have patience for finding and gathering links, history, context.
- You don't mind digging through dusty Phabricator tasks.
- You're familiar with (or want to learn) all the places where content exists across different repos.
- You like to take a high-level view of topic or set of docs and identify the most important pieces of information.

Skills you have or want to learn:
- Use Phabricator, create useful bug reports, and manage bugs.
- Communicate effectively in English about technical topics.

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Documentation warriors

Illustration: CC1.0 by LadyofHats

- You like sharing knowledge or teaching others.
- You like writing words and/or code.
- You're detail-oriented: you try things to verify the accuracy of existing docs, and you're able to run code examples to test their correctness.
- You like to follow guidelines, checklists, style guides or rubrics to complete tasks thoroughly and consistently.
- You can invest chunks of time into writing or improving docs.

Skills you have or want to learn:
- Editing wiki pages and wikitext; maybe also using markdown and Git/Gerrit
- Writing about technical topics
- Effective written communication in English or in another language (for translating)

Documentation rogues

- You like helping people solve problems.
- You're detail-oriented but can also connect details to the "big picture".
- You like to follow guidelines, checklists, style guides or rubrics to complete tasks thoroughly and consistently.
- You can't invest chunks of time in docs but you can complete atomic tasks like reviewing others' work or making small improvements to docs when you encounter issues.

Skills you have or want to learn:
- Follow-through and time management
- Inclusive language, plain English, and/or accessibility best practices for documentation
- Providing constructive criticism and communicating effectively in English
- Use Phabricator, create useful bug reports, and manage bugs
- Maybe: using markdown and Git/Gerrit

Illustration: CC1.0 by LadyofHats

Documentation mages

- You like building technical solutions to solve problems and make processes more efficient.
- You're detail-oriented but can also connect details to the "big picture".
- You want to smite every non-functional code example from the world of documentation.
- You're okay with ambiguity and undeterred when your spells fail at first.

Skills you have or want to learn:
- You already have intermediate or advanced coding skills.
- You know or want to learn about topics like doc testing, auto-generated documentation, linters, data analysis, and building dashboards.

What's next?

Image: Joseph Hewitt, GPL, via Wikimedia Commons

Illuminate the torches

- Discussion points will be aggregated and [posted on-wiki](https://tinyurl.com/DocDungeon) (https://tinyurl.com/DocDungeon) after the Hackathon.
  - Continue the discussion there to help define and direct our technical documentation efforts.
- Technical writers and WMF Developer Advocacy team will review discussions to help identify some of our focus areas for the coming year.
- Go talk about docs with other Hackathon attendees!
  - Ask someone what character class they think they are, and why?
  - Create a wiki page for your guild?
- Go create a party of adventurers and choose a doc dungeon to tackle!

References and related work

[Everyone's a Player in a Mid-90's MUD - Kenzie Woodbridge, Write the Docs 2017](#)

[Entry points and guide posts: Helping new contributors find their way - Janet Swisher, Write the Docs 2015](#)

[Emotional personas: writing for the human animal - Ryan Macklin](#)

[Wikipedia: Dungeon_crawl](#)

[Illustrations by LadyofHats](#)

[Wikipedia: Role-playing_game](#)

Icon: [GFDL](#) by [watabou](#)