



Limithron's

Compatible with
FontForge

DESIGN PRIMER

v1.0 - 4/11/24

5mm bleed for graphics and backgrounds (past the document edge).

5mm safety margin between important content and the document edge (though you can break this on purpose for style).

Margin and Bleed suggestions

RULE #1

PIRATE BORG is a game about grog-swilling pirates, undead galleons, arcane treasures found in ancient temples, and high seas adventure. It's not a game about slavery, sexual violence, genocide, or any of hundreds of other absolutely abhorrent real parts of our history. Please treat these topics with the respect they deserve, or leave them out of the game altogether and go hunt some skeletons.

RULE #2

This entire document is full of guidelines, not rules*. Break them when needed. It is intended to help creators match the style of Pirate Borg so that their content feels “in-world” for other GMs. But feel free to use your own fonts, creator unique art and graphics, and find our own style. I certainly did when I hacked Mörk Borg!

* Except rule #1 of course. Please don't break that rule.

Fonts Used In PIRATE BORG

*= Paid font, included with an Adobe Creative Cloud subscription. **=Paid font found elsewhere
Remember, you need to own a license to use fonts that aren't free.

*1638 Civilite Manual*** Messy cursive. Can be hard to read.

1651 Alchemy** Old, grungy body font, often used for headings and old-style text. Buccaneer spread, back cover, throughout the book.

1651 Alchemy Symbols** Useful for symbols. Alchemy spread.

Alegreya Primary serif body text font, used for stat blocks and dungeons. Use ExtraBold for Bold text.

Alegreya Sans Primary sans-serif body text font, used for stat blocks and dungeons. Use ExtraBold for Bold text. Also, [this](#) font!

Americratika

French Indies/Monarchy. **Warning:** it is very small and needs to be scaled up.

Aquilina Trvo

Handwritten script. "Perhaps you were once a decent person...", Buccaneer.

Bahnschrift Clean, modern body font. Equipment spread.

Barlos-Blackletter Grungy Blackletter. Pirate, Brethren of the Coast, and Necronomicon.

BEBASNEUE Modern, used in all caps for headings.

Blackletter HPLHS BlackletterHPLHS. Loud blackletter font. Used on spine in all caps, and for the Swashbuckler, Devil's Luck title. Ritual names.

Broadsheet* Old newspaper font with lots of glyphs. Used for Naval Combat stats.

Cabazon* Blackletter used for accents

Calling Code Often used for tables and "technical", game mechanic text. Regular is free, Adobe Fonts or purchase for Bold and Italic.

Corbel Modern, clean body font. Sorcerer text.

DIN Narrow/Condensed* Often used for dense, easy to read tables.

DIOGENES Greek-inspired, used in ALL CAPS for Sorcerer headings, Devil's Luck text.

Dk Couzant Blackletter headings. Violence. Physical Trademarks.

Futura*

Strong, clean, modern font. Used on the PC Cheat sheet and the back end paper rules summary. Also found in the 1st edition Dungeon Master's Guide.

Gothicus*

Blackletter, used for The Dark Caribbean. "Create a Player Character", Rapsallion spread.

GRYPHIUS*

Used in ALL CAPS for heading. Back end paper rules summary.

IM Fell English

One of the primary body and text fonts with an older look.

IM Fell Pica

One of the primary body and text fonts with an older look.

IM FELL PICA SC

One of the primary heading fonts. Used for all the page headings.

ITC Souvenir**

Ancient Relics. The font used in D&D B/X (a relic itself).

ISL Blackletter

Blackletter font used for headings and the Hit Points/Experience page, Zealot.

Killgrew

Blackletter font with a strong Gothic style used for headings and for The British.

LEANDER

Headers. Always used in all caps. West Indian Company, Curse of Skeleton Point, Coral Town.

Military Scibe*

Cursive handwritten font on Brute spread. Can be hard to read.

Monks Writing

Gritty blackletter. Spanish font, and cult stuff.

Dokoljaro

ÆSFJ, end paper headings. Dark Yucatan. Arcane Rituals. Mystical Mishaps. Often used in ALL CAPS or SMALL CAPS. Typically in the context of Mesoans, ancient temples, or things of an arcane nature.

Roman Antique

One of the primary body and text fonts with an older look. Italics is used for the main Limithron logo.

SALTPETRE**

Outline, maritime font. Tall Tale.

Transat*

Uncharted Islands text, used to match the style of Hot Spring Island.

Treasure Map Deadhand

Drinking Grog & Rum, Treasure map. Can look cartoony if overused.

ON WRITING & CONTENT

Ideally, Pirate Borg follows the following guidelines. Of course they can and should be broken when needed:

- ⚠ **Try to use terse, clear, but evocative writing.** The less words, the better.
- ⚠ **Use nested, hierarchic organization of information.** The most important thing in a room should be listed first. Try to move as far down this progression as possible:
Could this paragraph be a list? →
Could this list be a chart or diagram? →
Could this chart or diagram be an illustration? →
- ⚠ **Use bold text** for things the PCs can interact with, as well as monsters and NPC that might have stat blocks or info found elsewhere, either on the page or in the document. Think of bold text as “click on this to learn more”.
- ⚠ **Use page number references**, especially on the first occurrence of something on a page. Add hyperlinks in your PDFs.
- ⚠ **Avoid “read aloud text”.** Instead, give the GM the tools to describe the room so they are prepared to add more when needed.
- ⚠ **Emphasis meaningful player decisions.** Avoid railroading the PCs, and avoid writing in plot points that rely on the PCs following a certain path.
- ⚠ **Provide more than one solution to problems.** Diplomacy, creative problem solving, clever use of inventory, etc. There is always more than one answer. These don’t need to be spelled out, but “they can never open this door without the key” is undesirable.
- ⚠ **Design in “spreads”,** not pages or long chunks of text. Think of spreads as “control panels” the GM can use at the table, not a text box they need to study beforehand.
- ⚠ **Avoid low impact dice rolls**, especially anything that resembles a “perception check” or a social roll. Instead, leave tools for the GM to decide if the PCs have acted in a way that would allow them to notice the trap or convince the NPC to help them.

Thank you to Johan Nohr & Pelle Nilsson (Stockholm Kartell), Sean McCoy (Mothership), Brian Collin (Vast Grimm), and Chris McDowall (Into The Odd) for their inspiration in these guidelines.

AN EXAMPLE

NOT PIRATE BORG STYLE

As you enter the temple chamber, the skeleton sits on a throne burning in black flames. The very sight of it sends horrifying tremors of terror down your spine. You shiver in the cold. It turns and looks at you and says "Abandon all hope, ye mortals! Turn back and free yourselves from this mortal coil!!!" The walls ooze with green slime, and your search your soul for a way to save the Governor's daughter, who lays in the corner, from the clutches of this evil place. There is a 50-foot table statue of a hauntingly beautiful siren in the middle of the room and its eyes are focus on YOU!

If the PCs do not destroy the skeleton captain in 5 rounds, he summons a giant ghost kraken from the ground.

A DR 16 Presence test reveals that there is a trap door behind the throne. The skeleton can be convinced to release the girl if they ask him about his childhood.

No matter what happens, when the PCs try to leave the room, the siren statue animates and attacks!

The daughter wants to escape, and if she is set free she will run away. It takes a DR 6 ACILITY test to catch, after which she will tell any PC with a PRESENCE score of +3 or higher that there is trap door behind the throne and that the siren statue will attack. Otherwise she cries endlessly.

Opening the trap door requires a DR 14 STRENGTH test, which can only be tried once per character. It leads to a treasure room.

PIRATE BORG STYLE

Large temple chamber, ooze on the walls, smell of death, decay, and brine. Very cold.

- ☠ **50' statue of a siren.** It is terrifying but beautiful. It's eyes follow one random PC, and its face turns angry if the PCs try to leave with any treasure.
 - ☠ **Skeleton pirate captain** (pg. 32), ancient, cryptic, sad. It warns the PCs to leave before its too late. It is sitting on a:
 - ☠ **Throne of bone.** Permanently burning in black flames (harmless). Obscured behind the throne is:
 - ☠ **Wooden trap door.** It leads to the treasure room (pg. 34).
 - ☠ **The Governor's daughter**, gaged and bound, lies crying in the corner.
 - ☠ A **bookshelf** filled with old books.
- ▶ **LEAVE WITH TREASURE THE SIREN:** The statue animates and attacks.
Possible solutions:
 - an offering from the sea
 - cover its eyes with a blindfold
 - destroy it with a gunpowder weapons
 - ▶ **UN-GAG THE DAUGHTER:** She will warn about the statue, and knows there is a door behind the throne.
 - ▶ **MAKE TOO MUCH NOISE:** d6 skeleton warriors (pg. 33) arrive in d4 rounds.
 - ▶ **CHECK THE BOOKSHELF:** Most are ruined, but one is a heartfelt journal the captain wrote in life about his family life.

VISUAL STYLE

ART & LAYOUT

Pirate Borg's layout and visual style was designed to be loud, evocative, and eye catching, but also still be usable. I steered away from the neon and foil inks and glossy paper used in the original Mörk Borg in favor of muted tones, parchment paper background, and rich, uncoated paper stock. When working on your project, you can replicate this style by following these guidelines:

- ☛ Photo bash old 17th and 18th century public domain art and etches into the background.
- ☛ Use old paper images overlaid with water spatter, crumbled paper, and/or grit. But make sure the final background image is still light enough to read dark text on it. Or make it dark enough to set the text to a lighter color.
- ☛ Use muted colors, and set your graphics and layout programs to CMYK color space instead of RGB. It will be harder to get greens and purples to pop, but the document will look old and dated, and it will print closer to as it appears on your computer monitor.
- ☛ Tilt text boxes a few degrees of axis.
- ☛ Don't just use black for dark fonts. Dark brown, deep red, and muted dark blues work well for an older look.
- ☛ Don't be afraid to make spreads that are all black and white, and try inverting the colors to get different effects.
- ☛ Large, display-style fonts can be set to huge sizes and bleed off the side of the page, but make sure enough of the text is inside the margins to people can still read them.

ARTISTIC INFLUENCES

The following visual artists and selected works had a direct impact on the art style in Pirate Borg. Use this list to get inspiration, or find your own and develop a new style!

- ☛ Johan Nohr and Mörk Borg/CY_BORG
- ☛ Chris Bourassa and the Darkest Dungeon art team
- ☛ Mike Mignola and Hellboy
- ☛ Guy Davis and The Marquis graphic novel
- ☛ Todd McFarlane and the Spawn comics
- ☛ Gabriel Hernandez and The Dark of Hot Spring Island
- ☛ Concept art from Assassin's Creed IV: Black Flag

RESOURCES

PUBLIC DOMAIN ART

British Library Flickr	https://www.flickr.com/photos/britishlibrary/
Rijks Museum	https://www.rijksmuseum.nl/en

MAPS

Watabou Map Generator	watabou.itch.io
Limithron's Patreon	limithron.com/patreon
Dyson Logos Maps	https://dysonlogos.blog/maps/commercial-maps/

COMMUNITY

Limithron's Discord Server	limithron.com/discord
Limithron's Inspiration Database	limithron.com/database
Ex Libris	exlibrisrpg.com

ASSETS

Pirate Borg 3PP Logos	LINK
Free Fonts used in Pirate Borg	LINK
Lulu.com A5 Design Templates	LINK

OTHER DESIGN PRIMERS

Mörk Borg Design Primer	LINK
Vast Grimm Style Guide	LINK