The goal of the game is to descend in a deep dungeon with many levels and find the Amulet of Yendor from the lowest level and return to the entrance. Ascending towards the entrance from deeper levels and exiting the game at the entrance is possible only if the player carries the amulet. Adjacent levels are connected to each other with stairs.

Each level consists of a number of caves with different rectangular shapes and sizes, and corridors connecting the caves. The caves and corridors consist of locations and the player moves with the arrow keys to the next location, if possible. Each location can include either the player or some other creature (monster). In addition, each location can include different kinds of things which the player can pick up to help her/him. These include various kinds of weapons, armors, food and several different types of magic things (rings, scrolls, potions and wands). The player can also find gold piles of different sizes. Some cave locations may have secret trapdoors and if the player does not notice them, he/she can fall down to the next deeper level or even several levels. Caves have doors to the corridors, but sometimes the door is a hidden door. Otherwise the cave or corridor walls cannot be penetrated. On the first levels the caves are lighted, i.e., the play can see the whole cave when entering it. On deeper levels more and more caves are dark, and the player can see only the neighboring locations. Corridors are always dark. The player, however, will map each level when proceeding.

On each level the player will meet different types of monsters, most of which will attack her/him. The monsters become more dangerous, the deeper the player proceeds in the game. Many of them have special skills, such as freezing the player for a moment (floating eye) or confusing the player (umberhulk) so that he/she goes around randomly. Most monsters can attack the player only when they are in the neighboring location but some (dragon) can attack from distance, too. The player can attack the monsters by hitting them with the weapons they are currently wielding (proceedings towards the monsters's location) or throwing some weapons towards the monsters or using some magic wands which work from distance. Both the player and the monsters have initial life points which decrease, when they are hurt. If the life points decrease to zero the player/monster dies. When the player advances in the game he/she gets experience levels which make her/him stronger.

Only one weapon can be wielded at a time. Two rings and one armor can be worn at a time. Potions can be drunk. Scrolls can be read and wands can used. Weapons, armors and some rings have an initial spell which either makes them stronger or weaker. They can also be cursed which means that wearing a cursed ring or armor or wielding a cursed weapon implies that the item cannot be removed until the curse has been removed with some other magic thing. Initially all things can only be recognized with their symbols and only using them will reveal their spell, curse or impact, unless the player has already found an identical thing. Things have a weight and the player can carry only a limited weight.

On each time step the player can do one action (move, pick/drop item, eat food, use item, etc.) and equally each monster at the player's level will do one action. Some monsters are initially asleep and wake up randomly if the player passes by. The player consumes food on each step, the player gets hungry and finally faints, unless he/she eats more food.