

◆ DUNGEON DEGENERATES: HAND OF DOOM ◆

Getting It On the Table

SETUP GUIDE · FIELD MANUAL · NO EXCUSES

This is a setup guide for *Dungeon Degenerates: Hand of Doom*. It assumes you own the game, have stared into the box with mounting uncertainty, and are now ready to actually play it. Everything you need to go from sealed box to first turn, in order, with no steps skipped.

1-4 players · Soloable from the start

◆ ◆ ◆ First mission: On the Run

◆ BOARD · DECKS · COUNTERS · ADVENTURERS · WEAKNESS CARDS · MISSIONS ◆

FIRST Before You Touch Anything

★ Punch the Counters Now

Every counter in the game needs to be punched out of its sheet. Do this before your first session. Put on music. Make an evening of it. Sort them into piles by type. This takes 45 minutes and saves you 45 minutes every single time you play afterward. You will not regret it. You will regret not doing it.

The rules confirm this: Skills and Triumphs do not need to be shuffled. Write it down. Tattoo it somewhere. This is the most useful sentence in the entire rulebook.

01 Table Space

This game needs a large table. Not your coffee table. Not your best table either, because something will get spilled eventually. A dedicated game table is ideal. A cleared dining table is fine. A cleared kitchen counter is acceptable in a crisis.

SHORT ON SPACE?

→ Most decks can stay in the box until first needed. When a deck is called for for the first time, shuffle it and place it. Skills & Triumphs never need shuffling. Map overlay counters stay boxed until a mission requires them. The rules explicitly permit this — you are not cheating.

FULL SETUP?

→ Unfold the board center-table. All Monster decks (including Law & Epic), all Encounter decks, Loot, Epic Loot, and the Danger deck go near the board. Counters organized into piles within reach. Dice and both reference sheets on the table surface. You'll want everything accessible.

02 The Decks – What They Are

DECK	CARDS	NOTES
Monster Cards	120	Separated by territory/type. Remove XP VAL 3 cards first (see Step 04).
Law Monster Cards	14	Separate deck. Shuffled independently.
Epic Monster Cards	16	Separate deck. No XP VAL 3 cards in here.
Encounter Cards	64	Multiple decks by region/type. All shuffled.
Loot Cards	72	Shuffled after adventurers claim starting items.
Epic Loot Cards	12	Shuffled. Campaign start: remove Crown of Cruelty & Doombringer Horn first.
Danger Cards	36	Always shuffled. The deck that ends sessions.
Doom Cards	24	Not shuffled at setup. The Hand builds from these.
Skill Cards	36	Do NOT shuffle. Keep sorted. Draw when earned.
Triumph Cards	14	Do NOT shuffle. Keep sorted.
Weakness Cards	24	Shuffled. Optional draw at adventurer setup.
Sign of Power Cards	8	Set aside until a mission requires them.

Setting Up the Board

1

Unfold the board and place it in the center of the table. Orient it so everyone can reach their territories. Agree on this before play begins. You will not agree on it again once play has begun.

2

Place the decks around the board: all Monster decks (including Law and Epic Monsters), all Encounter decks, Loot, Epic Loot, and the Danger deck. If you're short on space, everything except Monster and Encounter decks can stay boxed until first needed.

3

Search each Monster deck and remove the XP VAL 3 monsters. These are printed with a yellow VAL block to make them findable. Create a separate discard pile for each Monster deck using these cards. The Epic Monster deck has no XP VAL 3 cards — leave it alone.

4

Campaign game only: Also remove these three cards from their decks — Crown of Cruelty (Epic Loot), Doombringer Horn (Epic Loot), and The Dread Saint (Epic Monster). These enter play only when a mission specifically calls for them.

5

Shuffle: Danger deck, Epic Loot deck, each Encounter deck, and each Monster deck including Epic Monsters. Remember: Skills and Triumphs do NOT get shuffled. Doom Cards do NOT get shuffled at setup.

6

Organize counters into piles near the board within reach of all players. Place both Reference Sheets and all six dice where everyone can access them.

★ The XP VAL 3 Step Is Not Optional

It sounds fiddly. It is fiddly. Do it anyway. The XP VAL 3 monsters are the hardest monsters in each deck. They're separated because you're not supposed to meet them at Danger Level 1 on your first turn. You earn them. The yellow VAL blocks are Åaberg being merciful. Accept the mercy.

Setting Up Your Adventurer

1

Choose your adventurer and claim their character sheet and standee. Each player takes one. If you're solo, you take one (or two if you're playing two-handed).

2

Place your starting counters on your character sheet: one each of Luck, Wound, GP, HP, and XP in the matching highlighted squares on the number track. These are the small square counters. They go on the numbers, not next to them.

3

Take your Stance counters: one Map Stance counter (Bold/Cautious) and one Combat Stance counter (Aggressive/Defensive). Place both on your character sheet.

4

Claim your starting Skill and Loot cards as listed on your character sheet. Starting Loot cards have yellow text areas — this is deliberate and makes them findable in the deck.

5

Once all players have their starting cards: shuffle the remaining Loot deck and place it near the board. Include the starting items of any adventurers not being used — they go into the pool.

05

The Weakness Card (Optional but Recommended)

After claiming your starting cards, you may draw a Weakness. You never have to. You should probably take one.

1

Draw a Weakness card. You may accept it or discard it — but only if you meet its requirements. If you don't qualify, discard it and draw again until you find one you can take.

2

If you accept it: you immediately gain the bonus XP printed on the card. Then you may draw a second Weakness, once, repeating the process. Maximum two Weaknesses at setup.

3

If you decline: shuffle it back and play without one. You miss the bonus XP. You also miss the hardship. In the Würstreich, these are not separate things.

★ The Bonus XP Is Real

Weaknesses represent the memories of past trials — experience you carry into the game. The bonus XP matters. The hardship also matters. Starting with a Weakness is how you begin as someone who has already survived something. That's the kind of adventurer who lasts.

06 Choose a Mission & Finish Setup

FIRST TIME PLAYING?

→ Play On the Run from the Mission Book. It is the introductory mission. Do not skip it. It was designed specifically to teach you the game while letting you feel like something is at stake. That balance is intentional and correct.

STANDALONE GAME?

→ Choose any mission from the Mission Book. Your mission will specify the starting Bounty Level and starting Location. Place the numbered blue Bounty Level counter on the track near Brüttelburg. Place adventurer standees on the starting space.

CAMPAIGN GAME?

→ Start with On the Run. The outcome of that mission determines your path through the campaign — which factions you work for, which missions open. Each completed mission leads to the next. The Mission Book tracks all of it.

1

Read the Mission's rules in the Mission Book before anything else. Every mission has a Setup section with additional steps specific to that mission.

2

Place Clue counters on the board as directed by your mission's Setup section. These mark objectives and points of interest for that specific mission.

3

Create the Mission deck if your mission requires one. The Mission Book will specify which cards to pull from which decks to create it. Set these aside as instructed.

4

Set your Bounty Level. Place the corresponding numbered blue counter on the Bounty Level track near Brüttelburg. Bounty Level cannot go below 1 or above 6.

5

Place adventurer standees on the starting space indicated by your mission. Campaign game: start where you ended last mission at the same Bounty Level, unless the Mission Book says otherwise.

6

You are ready to play. The turn structure is: Map Action Phase → Danger Phase → Encounter Phase. The Reference Sheet has this. Keep it visible.

07 The Counters: A Field Guide

There are many counters. This is normal. Here is what they are and roughly where they live.

3

Bounty Level
Blue numbered. Track near Brützelburg.

79

Danger Level
Orange numbered. Cover the board numbers.

29

Town Level
Green numbered. Settlements only.

20

Doom Track
Track the Hand of Doom's approach.

16

Epic Monster
Mark Epic Monster locations on the board.

8

Voidgate
Mark Void spaces. Handle with care.

6

Clue
Mission objective markers. Per mission.

35

Status Conditions
Applied to adventurers. Many varieties.

15

Monster Conditions
Applied to monsters in combat.

8

Stance
Bold/Cautious · Aggressive/Defensive. One of each per adventurer.

39

Wound
Small squares. Track damage on character sheet.

11+

GP / HP / Luck / XP
Character sheet trackers. One of each at start.

Map Trait Counters (Explored, Perilous, Destroyed, Fungus, Metaphysical, etc.) — stay in the box. They go on spaces during play when those spaces gain or lose traits. You'll encounter them organically. Don't sort them out at setup.

Between Sessions: Saving the Game

Ideally, leave the board set up between sessions. If you can't, record sheets are provided at the back of the Rules Book — downloadable at dungeondegenerates.com. Print several. Record everything listed below.

Board state to record: Doom counter count per color · next mission name and faction choice · persistent Doom cards in play · Epic Monster counter locations · Voidgate locations · Town Level and Danger Level per location and territory · current Bounty Level · map trait counters on locations and territories.

Adventurer state to record: Name and character type · current space · current HP, GP, XP, and Luck · all Skills, Masteries, Weaknesses, and Triumphs by name · all Loot and Epic Loot cards acquired.

★ Print the Record Sheets

The ones in the book are there to be photocopied. dungeondegenerates.com has downloadable versions. Print a stack before your campaign begins. A campaign through the full Mission Book will fill several. This is a feature, not a warning.