THE AGE OF ASH

Field Manual

PUBLIC PLAYTEST · VERSION 2.4 · 10 NOVEMBER 2026

RULES REFERENCE / VERSION 2.4

Rules and procedures

TableTop Engine: The Age of Ash

Consolidated playtest rules. Follow the setup and round procedures in order.

Game © Jamie Weston 2026 · Inquisition Games. Version 2.4 is the current experimental campaign ruleset and takes precedence over older PDFs.

Read the rules in playing order

- Prepare: equipment, recruitment and setup (sections 1–3).
- Play: the round sequence and attacks (sections 4–5).
- Resolve specials: orders, gambits, abilities, cryptids and injuries (sections 6–11).
- Progress: recording and campaign requisition (sections 12–13).

First game? Try the Quick Play guide and keep the Crib Sheet beside the board.

LEARN BY FOLLOWING A BATTLE

See the rules in action

Want to understand how TableTop Engine flows from one round to the next? Follow two illustrated, scripted Battle Reports with dice rolls, orders, movement, attacks, battlefield events and victory points shown step by step.

1. What you need

Equipment checklist

- Two armies: 400 points each for campaign Mission 1, progressing up to 500. Standalone games allow 500. No extra model limit applies.
- Battlefield: about 36 × 36 inches and 8–12 terrain pieces.
- Dice and measuring: D6 and D20 dice, a scatter die, a 5-inch storm template and two tape measures.
- Objectives: 3 point-of-interest markers and 9 mutants in 3 groups. Larger scenarios may use 5 markers and 15 mutants.
- Activation: coloured formation tokens and an opaque bag.

2. Build the army

Recruitment procedure

- Recruit one Captain and four Officers (five command models). All are compulsory.
- Recruit two Core squads, each with 3–5 fighters. You may recruit a third or fourth Core squad.
- Optionally recruit 0–2 Elite squads with 2 fighters each.
- Optionally recruit 0–2 Skirmisher patrols with 3 fighters each.
- Optionally recruit 0–2 Heavies with one tank or large specialist each.
- Check the current campaign allowance, or the 500-point standalone limit. Standard equipment is included in base costs; stronger loadouts cost extra.

Faction prices reflect battlefield strength. Points and squad limits govern the number of models, balancing larger infantry forces against smaller elite forces.

3. Set up a battle

Objectives and scoring

- Choose mission, campaign game and battlefield province after building both forces.
- Use 3 objectives, each defended by a neutral patrol of 3 mutants hostile to both players and cryptids. Larger games can use 5 objectives.
- Each patrol activates as one group. When 2 mutants die, the third flees.
- A cleared, uncontested objective scores 1 VP at the end of rounds 2–5.
- Agree an optional secondary objective worth 2 VP. Standard relic extraction is 3 VP; Relic Recovery is 5 VP.
- Build the warbands. Complete both armies before selecting the battlefield.
- Choose the scenario. Select the mission, game mode, campaign game (1–5) and battlefield province. The province applies to both companies and determines the available cryptids. A warband's starting city is its cultural and recruitment origin, not its battlefield.
- Prepare the battlefield. Place terrain and objectives according to the scenario.
- Determine deployment. Roll off with a D6 for deployment edges, then deploy squads alternately.
- Declare reserves. Eligible Skirmisher patrols may start in reserve for Uncloak.

4. Five-round activation sequence

Neutral activation: each defending three-mutant squad contributes one neutral token to the bag. It guards its marker, charges a threatening model within 6 inches or retaliates when shot. Attached Officers share a legal Core/Elite token; the cryptid acts separately before player activations. Natural 1 on a D6 never rerolls.

- Command Phase: Both players declare eligible Captain signature abilities and issue up to two orders each. Complete this before drawing activation tokens.
- Environmental event: At the start of round two, roll the standard event D20 once per battle, if not already resolved. A newly spawned cryptid acts before ordinary player activations.
- Prepare the bag: Put one token per active formation into an opaque bag. Attached Officers share their host squad's token; unattached Officers activate with the Captain's command group.
- Draw: Draw one token without looking. Its owner chooses an unactivated formation of that colour.
- Activate: The selected formation may Move, then Shoot or Manifest, or Charge and Fight. Apply relevant special rules and mark it activated.

- Continue: Repeat the draw and activation until the bag is empty.
- End of round: Resolve radiation exposure, objective scoring and effect expiry. Prepare the next round. The battle ends after round five.

A natural 1 on a test always fails; a natural 6 always succeeds where the rule allows a test. One Field Gambit per player per round may be used when its trigger permits.

5. Attacking

Critical D6 rolls: Natural 1 always critically fails and can never be rerolled, regardless of any ability. Natural 6 to Hit always hits and adds +1 Damage to that attack if it subsequently Wounds and beats its Save. Other natural 6 D6 results automatically succeed but do not add damage. Criticals apply to melee, ranged, mutants and cryptids. A successful critical Hit does not bypass Wound or Save.

- Hit: Roll D6 for every eligible attack against its Hit target, applying abilities or event modifiers (scenery supplies no generic cover bonus).
- Wound: For each successful hit, compare weapon Force (F) with target Toughness (T). Higher Force wounds on 3+; equal Force on 4+; lower Force on 5+.
- Save: The defender rolls its listed Save for every wound.
- Damage: For each failed Save, deduct the weapon's Damage from the defender's Wounds.

Melee weapons use their fighter's listed melee Attacks and Damage, but their own Force and reach. Ranged weapons use their weapon's range, attacks and damage. Force is not Armour Penetration: there is no independent AP statistic. Damage cannot become negative; the minimum is zero after defensive modifiers.

Shooting into an allied melee: You may fire at enemy fighters engaged with your own models. Every shooting Hit roll that misses, including a natural 1, is instead treated as a hit on a random friendly model in that same melee. Resolve Wound and Save normally. If there are no friendly fighters in that combat, use ordinary miss rules. Blast attacks affect every miniature under the template, friend, foe or neutral.

Destroyed Heavy models: All Heavy miniatures, including tanks and specialist artillery, always explode on destruction. Every model within 3 inches takes D3 Wounds, with one D3 roll per model, regardless of allegiance, including neutrals and cryptids. Each Heavy explodes at most once. A destroyed nearby Heavy triggers another explosion, creating a chain reaction.

6. The Command network

Captain order procedure

- Choose up to two separate friendly formations during each Command Phase. A formation may take only one order.
- Measure within 12 inches of the Captain, or build a relay through living, deployed Officers, each link no longer than 12 inches.
- Up to all four Officers may relay a command. An Officer can relay the same command without adding another order.
- Measure between nearest base edges. Chains cannot loop. Retreated, dead or undeployed Officers cannot relay. Line of sight is not required.

Available orders

- Steady Fire: +1 to one shooting Hit roll on the formation's next shooting activation.

- Hold Fast: enemy ranged shots against this formation suffer −1 to Hit until its next activation.
- Forced March: +2 inches Movement next activation; this formation cannot charge.

These are Captain orders. Field Gambits are a separate action.

Officer attachment: All four Officers are purchased as part of the Captain's five-model command group. Before deployment, each may be posted to one Core or Elite squad. No more than one Officer joins a host formation. Officers may never attach to Skirmishers or Heavy models. The Builder's dropdown and printed roster show the posting. An attached Officer shares the host squad's token, keeps command relay capability and follows the host's movement; detached Officers act on the Captain's command token. On a later round, moving between hosts or detaching requires the Officer to begin within 2 inches of the intended group and consume its normal activation movement. It must not activate twice.

Bodyguard's Oath: A living Officer within 2 inches of the Captain can take a normal ranged hit allocated to the Captain instead, if the Officer is also visible to the attacker and not behind an opaque wall. Likewise, an attached Officer in a host formation can be protected by an eligible visible regular fighter within 2 inches. This is a compulsory allocation while such protection is available, but does not apply to melee, blast templates or environmental damage. Visibility requirement is provisional and should be assessed on the tabletop.

7. Skirmisher patrols: Uncloak

Uncloak procedure

- A 3-model Skirmisher patrol may start in reserve.
- From round two, place the whole patrol in formation coherence, at least 3 inches from enemies, mutants, cryptids and objectives.
- Uncloak uses its Movement; the patrol may shoot, though it cannot move again, charge or score on the arrival round.

Deadshot Sniper, +14 points

- Only one fighter per Skirmisher patrol may take the loadout. Hunting rifle: range 30 inches, Force 3, 1 shot, Damage 2; +1 Hit if stationary.
- Profile: Wounds 1, Save 6+, Melee Attacks 1; normal faction Hit value and patrol movement.
- Deadshot: target one visible enemy model without normal allocation or Bodyguard's Oath. Range, walls and line of sight still apply.
- Expert Hider: ranged attacks targeting the Sniper suffer −1 Hit, with no melee protection.

Ordinary rifles do not have Deadshot.

8. Field Gambits and Rule of Cool

Each player may declare one Field Gambit per round, separate from Captain orders: Brace, Overcharge, Last Hurrah, Second Chance or Breakthrough. Second Chance rerolls one eligible failed attack D6 showing 2–5 only; a natural 1 is never rerollable, however powerful an ability seems. Overcharge applies to HQ and Elite ranged attacks; successful hits add D6 Damage, while every missed attack die (including a critical miss) deals D3 Wounds to its attacker without an armour Save. A natural 6 still adds the universal +1 critical Damage. For friendly-fire shots into a melee, apply both relevant risks.

Once per match, a Captain or Officer may attempt a physically plausible improvised Rule of Cool stunt using equipment or scenery available to that model. Roll D20; natural 1 critically fails and inflicts 2 Wounds on the initiator. For improvised damage, results 2-5 grant +1, 6-10 grant +2, 11-15 grant +3, 16-19 grant +4 and

natural 20 grant +6 Damage to a separately resolved attack (Hit/Wound/Save still apply). For other dramatic effects use 11+ as the provisional standard success threshold; exceptional command extensions need 16+. Movement stunts on a success grant D6 additional inches, and a natural 20 may use the fighter's maximum normal movement plus that D6. A defender can use a valid defensive Field Gambit or its own unspent Rule of Cool in response. The players agree the action category and achievable result before rolling.

9. Captain signature abilities - once per battle

- Penitent Concord - Burn the Witch: Declared at the start of a Command Phase before orders. Until the next allied Command Phase, nobody may begin a new Awakened manifestation. Existing supernatural effects are not automatically removed. Radiation, physical cryptid attacks and ordinary weapons continue.
- Crowned Marches - Iron Edict: Both formations receiving the Captain's two orders improve their Save by one step against ordinary shooting until each formation's next activation. No additional orders.
- Saltbound League - Parley Under Arms: For one round, enemy non-Captain fighters cannot target the Saltbound Captain with ordinary ranged attacks. Enemy Captains, melee, blasts and environmental damage remain possible.
- Cinder Porte - Sins of Greed: At the beginning of the same Command Phase, the opponent loses its two Captain order opportunities. This does not prevent its normal activations or Field Gambits.
- Veiled Communion - Chains of Guilt: Enemy fighters and unengaged hostile cryptids suffer -2 inches Movement (minimum 1) for that round. Engaged cryptids fight normally; radiation is unaffected.
- The Scattered - Rally the Lost: Choose up to two friendly Core squads within the command network; until the following allied Command Phase, they receive a 6+ Wound-negation roll for each unsaved wound. It creates no additional orders.

All abilities are free in the Captain's base cost and usable once per battle. They do not override the two-order allowance. A Captain that dies cannot initiate an ability. An ability already declared persists to its printed expiry despite the Captain's death. If opposing Captains both declare abilities, declarations occur before ordinary orders, with D6 roll-off determining declaration order where timing matters; neither can cancel a completed declaration unless explicitly stated.

10. Radiation Storm or Cryptid

D20 environmental event: round two

- At the start of round two, roll D20 once. Results 1–10 introduce a cryptid. Results 11–20 introduce a radiation storm.
- On a cryptid result, use the province's three-creature table and the scenario entry point. Standard cryptids start with 15 Wounds; Boss-class cryptids with 20.
- The cryptid activates immediately before normal player activations. It attacks both armies and mutant patrols. In later rounds unengaged cryptids retarget after a two-player D6 roll-off; engaged ones remain in combat.
- At half starting Wounds or below, it becomes Enraged and gains one melee Attack.
- Record actual Wounds inflicted by each squad. Every complete 5 Wounds earns one one-use Cryptid Die for a later campaign encounter, rerolling one eligible failed Hit, Wound or Save against a cryptid, never a natural 1.
- Every squad that wounds a cryptid becomes a Cryptid Veteran. In Cryptid Hunt, each full 5 Wounds dealt earns 1 VP.
- A defeated cryptid leaves a unique trophy at its corpse. A fighter must reach and claim it; the last attacker has no automatic entitlement. Use the trophy once now or retain it for the campaign.

Radiation storm procedure

- Place a 5-inch template at the centre. Scatter it D6 inches in the scatter-die direction on arrival and on each later round.
- At the end of each round, every model inside takes 1 Wound, with a 5+ protection roll for suitable equipment.
- Shots through the storm suffer −2 Hit. Incoming ranged damage from outside the template is reduced by 2 (minimum zero).
- Moving through the storm costs 1 inch of Movement. Both armies can be affected.

Unit profiles and signature abilities (2.3 playtest)

The following profiles apply before choosing a variant. Point costs and equipment come from the Army Builder. An Iron Lancer is easier for enemies to Hit; that does not worsen its own Hit value. The Shatterbound has four starting Wounds under the current playtest decision. Snipers have W1, Save 6+ and A1 regardless of their faction’s Skirmisher baseline.

The Penitent Concord

Black Sacristan (Elite) — M5 W4 Hit3+ T4 Save3+ A2 D2 Resolve2+
Intercession: Once per round, when a friendly Concord Core fighter within 3″ suffers an unsaved Wound, this Sacristan may take 1 of those Wounds instead. This cannot prevent more Wounds than the Sacristan has remaining.

Lantern Hunter (Skirmisher) — M8 W2 Hit4+ T3 Save5+ A2 D1 Resolve3+
Standard unit rules and chosen equipment apply.

Reliquary Bombardier (Heavy) — M3 W10 Hit4+ T5 Save3+ A1 D2 Resolve2+
Consecrated Payload: Ranged attacks from this Reliquary Bombardier gain +1 to Wound against a cryptid or a model with the Awakened trait. This bonus does not apply against ordinary soldiers.

The Crowned Marches

Iron Lancer (Elite) — M8 W4 Hit3+ T4 Save2+ A2 D2 Resolve3+
Bulky Target: Enemy melee and ranged Hit rolls targeting this large, armoured fighter gain +1 (effective Hit target cannot improve beyond 2+; a natural 1 always fails). Charge of Iron: If the Iron Lancer moved at least 4″ as part of a successful charge this turn, its first melee attack in the ensuing Fight gains +1 Damage.

Border Reiter (Skirmisher) — M10 W2 Hit4+ T3 Save4+ A2 D1 Resolve4+
Standard unit rules and chosen equipment apply.

Clockwork Gunner (Heavy) — M4 W10 Hit3+ T5 Save2+ A1 D2 Resolve3+
Clockwork Overdrive: Once per battle, before shooting, declare Overdrive: its clockwork gun makes one additional ranged attack. If any Overdrive attack Hit roll is a natural 1, the Gunner suffers 1 automatic Wound after its shooting resolves.

The Saltbound League

Boarding Reaver (Elite) — M7 W3 Hit3+ T3 Save4+ A3 D2 Resolve4+
Boarding Rush: If this Reaver charges, it gains +1 melee Attack in its next Fight that turn.

Tide Stalker (Skirmisher) — M9 W2 Hit4+ T3 Save5+ A3 D1 Resolve5+
Standard unit rules and chosen equipment apply.

Shipbreaker (Heavy) — M6 W8 Hit4+ T4 Save4+ A2 D2 Resolve4+
Mobile Deck Gun: This Shipbreaker may fire its swivel gun even after moving this activation, subject to ordinary range and line of sight. Harpoon Drag: When its harpoon attack successfully Wounds a non-Heavy enemy, the target can be pulled up to 2″ directly towards the Shipbreaker, stopping at occupied or illegal positions.

The Cinder Porte

Ash Guard (Elite) — M5 W4 Hit3+ T5 Save3+ A2 D2 Resolve3+
Shield Line: Once per battle round, reduce the Damage of the first successful melee hit allocated to this Ash Guard by 1, minimum 1. Its armour Save remains 3+.

Frontier Rider (Skirmisher) — M9 W2 Hit3+ T3 Save5+ A2 D1 Resolve4+
Standard unit rules and chosen equipment apply.

Brass Bombardier (Heavy) — M4 W10 Hit4+ T5 Save3+ A1 D2 Resolve3+
Cinder Suppression: A unit that suffers an unsaved Wound from this Brass Bombardier has −1″ Movement (minimum 1″) on its next activation. This effect targets the unit; it does not create a patch of hazardous terrain.

The Veiled Communion

Resonant (Elite) — M7 W3 Hit3+ T3 Save5+ A2 D2 Resolve3+
Phase Step: After this Resonant successfully manifests an Awakened ability, it may immediately move up to 3″ to a legal unoccupied position. This is not a charge.

Veilstrider (Skirmisher) — M7 W2 Hit4+ T3 Save6+ A2 D1 Resolve4+
Veilstep: From battle round 2, at the end of each Communion player turn, one surviving Veilstrider patrol may teleport using Uncloak placement: every model must finish at least 3″ from enemies, neutral NPCs and objectives, in legal formation coherency. It may not move, shoot or charge after teleporting that turn. Repeatable once each owning turn.

Shatterbound (Heavy) — M5 W4 Hit4+ T5 Save4+ A3 D3 Resolve4+
Chaotic Instability: At the end of every battle round, roll D20 for each surviving Shatterbound. On 15–20 it is stable. On 2–14 it suffers 1 automatic Wound. On a natural 1 it suffers 2 automatic Wounds total. No Hit, Wound or Save rolls apply; destruction triggers the normal Heavy explosion. Rift Shock: Once per battle, after this Shatterbound successfully Wounds a model in melee, push that model up to 2″ directly away, stopping at the nearest legal position.

The Scattered

Veteran Defender (Elite) — M6 W4 Hit3+ T4 Save4+ A2 D2 Resolve3+
Last Wall: Once per battle, if this Veteran Defender is within 3″ of a friendly Scattered Core fighter when it suffers an unsaved Wound, reduce that Wound by 1 (minimum 0). This requires no terrain.

Woodland Hunter (Skirmisher) — M9 W2 Hit4+ T4 Save6+ A2 D1 Resolve4+
Standard unit rules and chosen equipment apply.

Miller’s Cannon (Heavy) — M4 W8 Hit5+ T4 Save5+ A1 D1 Resolve4+
Unreliable Powder: When a shooting Hit roll for the Miller’s Cannon is a natural 1, the cannon suffers 1 automatic Wound after the shot resolves. Field Repairs: Once per battle, if this cannon did not move this activation, roll a D6; on 5+ it regains 1 lost Wound up to its starting maximum.

Officers: The four individual command companions are called Officers, with personal names and faction-specific equipment choices. They relay commands and can use Bodyguard’s Oath as described in section 6. Terrain: Ordinary scenery can block line of sight, but has no separate terrain modifiers in this playtest. The Radiation Storm remains the only environmental effect.

11. Retreat, injuries and campaign

Retreat and service marks

- To withdraw the last squad member: move up to normal speed on its first withdrawal activation, then up to double speed on the next and exit at its deployment edge. The fighter remains vulnerable until it leaves.
- Surviving fighters retain their equipment. A formation with one or more survivors at battle end, including a fighter who retreated, gains one service mark. A wiped-out formation gains none.
- At 1 mark, Rank I gives 1 Veteran Six in each later battle. At 3 marks, Rank II gives 2 Veteran Sixes.
- Before rolling an eligible Hit, Wound or Save pool, replace one ordinary die with a fixed 6. Spend no more than one per formation activation.

- A Veteran Six used to Hit is a critical Hit: +1 Damage only if it Wounds and the defender fails its Save. It cannot bypass rolls or make all blast targets critical.
- A natural 1 already rolled cannot be replaced. Veteran Sixes refresh next battle, and cannot be transferred to another campaign.

12. Playtest recording

Record each round's time, objectives, wounds dealt by ranged/melee attacks, orders used, Uncloak timing, Captain abilities used, cryptid/storm impact, and confusing or disputed rulings. We are testing speed, clarity and fun, not treating these prices as balanced until people have played actual games.

13. Five-mission requisition and opponent fairness

Personal requisition allowance

- Each player's campaign starts with 400 RP.
- After Missions 1–4, add that player's earned RP to their personal allowance. There are no fixed mission-by-mission caps: 28 earned means 428 for Mission 2; 18 earned means 418.
- The hard ceiling remains 500 points. Builder and Campaign Journal show the same saved figure.
- Use the increased allowance to recruit formations or fighters and buy equipment. You cannot afford every possible upgrade at once.

Complete a campaign mission

- Start in the empty 400-point Builder. Recruit the Captain, 4 Officers and 2 Core squads manually. Add affordable optional formations.
- Use Play Mode to record neutral kills, actual cryptid Wounds, objective scores, wounds and survivors.
- Select Win, Draw or Loss and press Finish Mission & Upgrade Army.
- The reward is recorded once. The next mission unlocks and the same roster reopens with the new allowance (maximum 500).
- Make upgrades to your saved roster before starting the next battle.

Leaving Play Mode without finishing grants no points. A standalone 500-point battle also earns no campaign requisition.

Battle rewards for Missions 1–4: +18 RP for taking part, regardless of result; +10 RP for winning; +2 RP per mutant miniature personally defeated (maximum 20 counted); +10 RP for the player whose company contributed most actual damage to the cryptid, or +4 RP for second place. Only award a damage placing if the company dealt at least one Wound. These amounts are even; do not round them. The fifth mission is the finale and awards no transferable RP. The guaranteed Cryptid in Mission 3 spawns at round two; normal event rolls apply in other missions.

New campaigns are new timelines. The normal campaign is five consecutive games between the same two players, tracked by a unique campaign ID. Starting one against a new opponent means a fresh 400-point roster without old upgrades, trophies, service marks or Veteran Sixes. A campaign veteran may fight a player from another established campaign only when both are on the same mission level and agree matched fielded points. A one-off guest may instead use a freshly created force at exactly the actual points of the veteran player's deployed army. Veteran Sixes must be matched in quantity or switched off for both sides. These are crossover games, not free advancement into a new campaign.