

DEATHMANCER

Core Rulebook

V2.0 Playtest Draft

A competitive engine-building card game where players race to 100 points over 6 rounds.

Each Commander shapes your deck, your tempo and your path between the Living and the Undead.

**Living Heroes score. Undead units scale the multiplier. Death is not the end - it is
*transformation.***

Power cannot die. It just changes form.

1. WHAT IS DEATHMANCER?

Deathmancer is a competitive card game for 1-2 players (4 players with expansion). Each player controls a Commander and fights across two connected realms: the Living Realm above and the Dead Realm below. See deathmancer.com for the single-player rules.

Living Heroes ‘shoot for the heavens’, i.e. generate your score. Score must be spent to recruit new Heroes or summon Undead. Undead units can increase your multiplier, attack opposing Heroes or disrupt the opponents. Once killed, living Heroes turn Undead (‘the fallen’) and scale your Undead army engine. The question is how to spend your one Living and Undead action point each turn – score consistently or invest in your Undead army for longer-term power and disruption.

Objective

- Be the *first* player to reach 100 score.
- If no player reaches 100 by the end of Round 6, then the highest score wins.
- Initiative is determined by the player with the highest current score, so spend and scale wisely.

2. COMPONENTS

- 2x Two-sided Commander cards (Archimedes & Balthazar), each with Living and Undead sides.
- 2x 19-card player deck, including one Auto-Summon kept outside of the drawn deck.
- 10x The Fallen token cards.
- 2x Purgatory cards.
- 2x Inversion cards.
- 1x Two-sided Quick Reference card.
- (Optional) D6 for terrain and/or round tracking.
- (Optional) Damage token trackers.
- Score tracker companion app (see QR linked to website).

3. SETUP

1. Place your Commander in the Living Realm.
2. Set your Auto-Summon and Fallen units beside the board – they are not in the drawable deck.
3. Shuffle your deck and draw 5 cards.
4. Start with score equal to your Commander’s Living Soul (‘Sol’).
5. Place a D6 at the top of the board to track the round.

Commander	Starting Score
Archimedes, The Virtuous	12
Balthazar, The Ascendant Angel	8

4. KEY CONCEPTS

Living Realm

Contains your Commander whilst living and any recruited Living Heroes. Living Heroes are your main scoring engine.

Dead Realm

Contains summoned Undead, The Fallen Undead and your Commander (if killed). Undead provide potential multiplier, attacks, passives and disruption.

Soul

Soul ('SOL') is health for Living units. When a Living unit reaches 0 Sol, it dies and becomes Undead.

Power

Power ('POW') is the value which your Living Heroes commit to your score when used for the Living Realm action point.

Attack

Attack ('ATK') is used by Undead to damage any Living units.

Multiplier

Base multiplier is 1.0. Undead units add to this while they remain in play. Multiplier is always active and is not spent or reset.

5. ROUND STRUCTURE

Step	What happens
1	Draw a card.
2	On Round 2 only: Auto-Summons enter play.
3	On Rounds 3 onwards: roll the dice for terrain (see below).
4	Determine initiative from each player's current Score.
5	Players take turns in initiative order. There is one action point for the Living Realm and one for the Dead Realm.
6	Each player totals their score changes during play (keeping tally with paper/pen, or using the companion app). Once complete, pass the turn to the player with the next highest score. Then advance the round, or finish the game after Round 6.

Initiative

- At the start of each round, the player with the highest cumulative score goes first;
- This is important, as you either have the opportunity to score and reach 100 points first, or impact the current play first.
- If tied, the player who did not have initiative last round goes first.

6. LIVING ACTIONS

During your turn, take 1 Living Action. Choose one of the following:

Action	Effect
Post Score	Gain score equal to total POW of Living Heroes x multiplier.
Recruit Hero	Play a Hero from hand to the Living Realm. Cost = that Hero's SOL value (deducted from your current score).
Summon Undead (<i>if Commander is Living only</i>)	Commander only. Play a summonable Undead to the Dead Realm. Cost = that Undead unit's ATK value (deducted from your current score).

If your Commander is Undead, they are not counted when you score using your Living Action. Living Action scoring counts Living Heroes only.

7. UNDEAD ACTIONS

During your turn, take 1 Undead Action. Choose one of the following:

Action	Effect
Attack	Undead units attack. Assign each unit's damage individually to any Living target.
Use Special Ability (if available)	Use the special ability of one Undead unit (if present).
Commander Override (<i>if Commander is Undead only</i>)	If your Commander is Undead, it may score or summon instead (cannot attack).

Undead Commander Attacking Rule

An Undead Commander does not attack alongside the other Undead. If your Commander is Undead, you must choose between using Undead units to attack/use a special ability, or using the Commander to score or summon.

Undead Commander Scoring

If your Undead Commander uses Commander Override to score, count the Commander's POW and all Living Heroes' POW. Multiply that total by your current multiplier.

8. SCORING AND MULTIPLIERS

Formula: Total POW x Multiplier = Score gained.

Example: 12 total POW x 1.8 multiplier = 21.6, rounded to 22 score. (Tip: use the companion app for simplicity vs pen/paper/calculator).

Rounding (if applicable)

- 0.1 to 0.4 rounds down.
- 0.5 to 0.9 rounds up.

Multiplier Order

1. Start from base multiplier 1.0.
2. Add all multiplier values from Undead units (if present).
3. Apply any multiplier increases (if applicable, i.e. from card abilities), including a terrain roll 6 (see below).
4. Apply any multiplier reductions (if applicable, i.e. from card abilities).

9. DAMAGE, DEATH AND ‘THE FALLEN’ TOKENS

- Damage reduces a Living unit’s Soul (‘SOL’).
- At 0 SOL, a Living unit dies immediately.
- A non-Commander hero becomes one of The Fallen in the Dead Realm (transform into token unit).
- A Commander flips to its Undead side.

10. TERRAIN

Rounds 1 and 2 have no terrain. From Round 3 onward, roll a D6 at the start of each round after initiative.

Roll	Effect
1 - ‘Cursed Marshlands’	Undead gain +1 ATK this round.
2 - ‘Holy Grounds’	All Living units heal +1 Soul.
3 - ‘Obsidian Peaks’	Each player draws +1 card.
4 - ‘Souls Enclosure’	No healing this round.
5 - ‘Shadows Binding’	No Undead may attack this round.
6 - ‘Eternal Night’	Each player’s multiplier is doubled this round.

11. PURGATORY / INVERSION

Purgatory and Inversion are one-off reactive cards present in each deck. They are not Hero, nor Undead units.

Inversion acts to counter typical deck strengths and may provide a boosted score or multiplier where this is preferential.

Purgatory:

- May be played at any time from hand to cancel an opponent's singular action.
- May be used in response to another Purgatory.
- A cancelled action has no effect. Any costs already paid are refunded. Any units played from hand are returned there. The action turn is lost.

12. END OF GAME

- The first player to reach 100 score wins.
- If no player reaches 100 by the end of Round 6, then the highest score wins.
- If tied after Round 6, play one sudden-death round or agree to a draw.

13. CARD ABILITY TYPES

Type	Meaning
Passive	Always active while the unit remains in play.
On Recruit / On Summon	Triggers once when the unit is recruited/summoned.
Instant	Applies to special one-off cards and can be played during anyone's round, at any time.
Ability	Used as the chosen Undead special during your Undead Action (repeatable in each round).

Auto-Summons

Each Commander's Auto-Summon enters play at the start of Round 2. It starts outside the deck and costs no action point nor score cost to summon.

14. CLARIFICATIONS AND FAQ

Does an Undead Commander attack with the other Undead?

No. It may use Commander Override to score or summon, but does not attack as part of the Undead attack action.

If a card says “No undead may attack next turn”, does that stop an Undead Commander from scoring?

No. Attack means the Undead damage action. Commander Override is separate (when relevant).

How does Daemon interact with terrain roll 6?

Daemon's multiplier bonus is included first. The resulting total is then doubled.

How does Warden interact with multiplier boosts?

Apply all increases first, including any terrain roll 6. Warden then reduces the final total by up to 0.5.

What actions does Abyss apply to?

Only those where the player had the *option* to score, but opted not to. For example, if during the player's Undead action, the Commander is not present, they could not have scored. Hence the penalty awarded does not apply. Equally, if during the Living action, none are alive, no scoring could apply.

Can Purgatory cancel Purgatory?

Yes.

Can Purgatory cancel Inversion?

Yes.

How does Inversion work on POW value?

Inversion applies to the total POW value, before any multipliers.

Can non-Commanders summon Undead?

No. Only Commanders can summon Undead, whether Living or Undead. That is why the summoning action uses either the Living Realm action, or the Dead Realm action, depending on where the Commander is in play.

Playtest reminder

Use +/- dice or available tokens to show any damage to Living Heroes (or note on paper). Use a D6 at the top of the board as a round tracker (or use the companion app). Remember to re-check initiative every round, because scores will frequently change.

15. QUICK REFERENCE

Round Start Checklist	Action
1	Draw 1 card.
2	Round 2: move Auto-Summons into the Dead Realm.
3	Determine initiative from current score.
4	Round 3+: roll terrain.
5	Take turns: (per player) Living Action, then Undead Action.

Living Action (1 of the following):	Reminder
Post Score	Living POW total x any Undead multiplier.
Recruit Hero	Cost = Hero's SOL value.
Summon Undead (<i>if Commander is Living only</i>)	Cost = Undead ATK.

Undead Action (1 of the following):	Reminder
Attack	Undead units attack; assign damage individually to opponent's Living unit.
Use Special Ability (if present)	Choose one Undead special ability (if available).
Commander Override (<i>if Commander is Undead only</i>)	If Commander is Undead: score or summon (cannot attack).

Living contribute scoring. Undead provide scaling. The best move each turn is rarely obvious.

This is a working playtest rulebook. Balancing, wording and card text may change as Deathmancer develops.

Copyright Notice

Deathmancer, including its rulebook text, card text, card layout, graphic design, logos, worldbuilding, names and associated promotional materials is © 2026 Joe Green. Artwork © of Glen Holman and the respective credited artists, unless otherwise agreed in writing. All rights reserved.

No part of this rulebook, card set, artwork, design, or associated materials may be copied, reproduced, distributed, sold, adapted, or used in any commercial product without prior written permission from the copyright owner.

