

WOE TO THE WICKED

Game Master Book

ALPHA v44 - PLAYTEST EDITION

Prepare situations, run the shared rules, develop threats and preserve the consequences of player choices.

Simple rules. Complicated situations.

Preparation, restoration and consequential choices in a fallen world.

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Your first session

Read the **Player Book's** **resolution**, **attacks**, **recovery** and **Hope** procedures. Choose **The Bleeding Grave** for a short opening or **Bitter Cargo** for a longer escort and investigation. Prepare the objective, visible situation, likely opponents, rewards and a plausible retreat route. Give players their briefing and sheets; keep secrets in the GM materials.

Prepare a playable situation

Prepare	Example from Bitter Cargo
Objective and commission	Escort restoration supplies and memorial records from Styrt to the survey camp near Nalt; agree completion and payment before departure.
Visible pressure	A load shifts over a porter; spoiled supplies and damaged names invite investigation.
Information and people	Mara can provide a bounded contract. A cartwright can help with repairs. Neither knows the whole conspiracy.
Choices	Rescue, preserve evidence, repair, question people, continue the escort or withdraw.
Consequences and escape	Resolve losses from actual failed attempts. The escort contract does not secretly require defeating Vexar.
Records	Cargo, saved people, evidence, current resources and any established settlement change.

An ordinary credible action can succeed without a roll. Put essential information in reach through more than one suitable approach; do not require one failed lookup roll to stop the adventure.

For party capability, review actual learned Techniques, including magical methods, trained Skills, resources and equipment. Renown measures recognition, not a combat budget. NPC printed abilities are fixed profile permissions and do not require building a nine-slot player character.

Adjudication

Read entries by Name - Category, then Requires, Use and Effect. Requires gives eligibility; Use gives timing, targets, reach, costs and frequency; Effect gives resolution and consequences. Omitted fields follow **Player Book**. Italic text is flavor only. Profile statistics remain separate.

The GM describes the world and uses a Test or Contest when the outcome is uncertain and consequential. TN 4 is ordinary. A GM-created TN must be reachable with the legal method and effects. If the attempt is impossible, explain what must change. A failed roll changes the situation; an identical, consequence-free retry requires a new method, circumstance, cost, information, or meaningful passage of time.

Use Compression to condense routine steps, Progress to show meaningful stages of a larger goal, Position to reflect access, terrain, leverage, or exposure, Escalation to increase a threat or cost, and Intervention to introduce a person, event, or changed situation. Do not retroactively negate a resolved success. Help or preparation requires a plausible contribution and may create a legal method, improve position, or remove the need for a roll.

Shared design template

Use the same Test, Contest, damage, critical and die-change procedures across combat, equipment, terrain, travel and strongholds. Subsystem entries state their permission, cost, trigger, effect and endpoint; describe only exceptions to **Player Book**. A Hit or Damaging Hit rider does not require a second roll against the same target. A distinct unresolved task can still require its own Skill: lifting a chest does not resolve transporting its fragile contents.

Conditions expire or end by their stated action or circumstance. **Afflictions** need their stated removal requirement. Rest uses **Recover** under **Player Book**; do not require special treatment for routine recovery. **Training** uses meaningful critical successes and critically damaging hits, or paid mentor instruction. Record eligible advancement during a quiet decision window rather than waiting for a Full Rest.

Holdings provide Military Assets, Fortifications and Utilities across Stronghold, Settlement and Realm scopes. Transport supplies movement, Carry and access. Compress routine activity; use existing Skills for consequential obstacles and encounters. Supporting assets inform the situation rather than creating a separate resolution engine.

Quest preparation

Use the **Party Sheet** to check party size, Renown, resources, and notable capabilities. Record the objective, employer, stakes, outward route and biome, likely encounters and escape options, rest opportunities, return pressure, stated Gold commission, individual item slots, and the bonus party item. Quest Rank is a preparation benchmark, not a guarantee of balanced combat or a rule that the world scales to the party.

Quest Rank describes the job's danger/scope, not a character Level band. State it with the objective and commission before commitment. Guild rank guides suitable commissions without scaling local creatures.

Quest loot

On a completed quest, provide one individual item per character and one bonus party item. Assign the party item first. A manually assigned item fills its slot. For an unassigned slot, use the quest Rank d10: Rank 1 Common automatically; Rank 2, 1-6 Common / 7-10 Uncommon; Rank 3, 1-6 Uncommon / 7-10 Rare; Rank 4, 1-6 Rare / 7-10 Venerated; Rank 5, 1-2 Venerated / 3-10 Exalted. Quest-essential objects are separate from these allocations.

Independent GM checklist

- State the quest objective, employer, stakes, Rank, and commission before the party commits.
- Record outward route, biome, expected travel time, likely hazards, and available rest opportunities.
- Choose foes and obstacles for roles, terrain, objectives, and escape options; Quest Rank is guidance, not guaranteed balance.
- Resolve only meaningful uncertainty. Use Position, preparation, Advantage/Disadvantage, or changed permission before inventing new modifiers.
- Track settlement Reputation and Economic Impact on the [Party Sheet](#) using the [Player Book settlement rules](#). Record routes, allies/enemies, property and unresolved threats as fiction; do not duplicate shop or Rapport counters.
- On return, resolve payment, loot, resource sale/crafting, Full Rest where appropriate, Training/downtime, and advancement.

Encounter preparation

Use predetermined creature profiles and encounter tables appropriate to the actual area's danger. Review party size, learned methods, resources, terrain, concentrated attacks and escape routes. Do not derive an encounter allowance from average Level or automatically scale the world to party rank.

Ordinary enemy Tiers 1-4 retain reference costs 1/2/4/8 per individual as fixed threat descriptions, not an automatic party budget. Combinations can be more dangerous than their totals suggest. Tier 0 is usually incidental; Tier 5 Wicked Ones use their separately prepared fixed profiles. Warn of overwhelming danger and preserve escape options.

Enemy tier is a fixed provisional threat classification, not an automatic copy of old catalog Level Bands. Check individual danger, concentrated attacks, support combinations and legal access. See the [Table Reference](#) for the preparation procedure. Combat resolution is unchanged.

Starting combat and surprise

Determine awareness before resolving combat-start Reactions. Use the Player Book's Surprise procedure: uncertain concealment is Maneuver + Agility against Perception + Intellect, observer wins ties. Revealing effects establish awareness within their printed scope. A Surprised unit cannot react until its first turn begins; follow normal turn order.

A Mist Hag's mist reveals units within it unless magically hidden. She may use her combat-start Hide and Seek only when not Surprised; if Surprised, that opening use becomes available at the start of her first turn. Her full profile is in Monsters; its GM running guide explains the sequence.

Resource opportunities

Each character may attempt one resource discovery check per travel day. Generate a resource opportunity only when that character chooses to search. The GM privately determines the discoverable tier using the quest Rank d10 table: Rank 1 Common; Rank 2, 1-6 Common / 7-10 Uncommon; Rank 3, 1-6 Uncommon / 7-10 Rare; Rank 4, 1-6 Rare / 7-10 Venerated; Rank 5, 1-2 Venerated / 3-10 Exalted. Select a resource of that tier from the biome the party is actually traveling through.

After choosing the opportunity, use the player-facing **discovery and yield procedure** in **Player Book**. **Player Options: Resources and crafting** supplies the biome resources; the **creature catalog** supplies ecological placement.

Holding and transport preparation

Begin an ongoing campaign in a small town: the local Guild coalition grants a shared home, neglected guild hall or mostly ruined fortress. Capital connections support the branch; prepare only relevant people and routes. Use **Holdings and Leadership** for appointments and obligations. Establish available assets, protection and people at stake. Use the **holding framework** for quest/event changes and each entry's actual requirements and capacities. Forces create opportunities and exposure, not a recurring army simulation.

A meaningful completed addition, secured approach or restored supply route can be a meaningful improvement under Wicked One development. Consider one reasonable unopposed accomplishment, not one automatic tick per crafting Test, upkeep payment or animal purchase. The existing rule and actual fiction determine what matters. Stopping an enemy's supply prevents the next plausible construction; it does not erase completed defenses.

For travel, state route/time and one consequential obstruction or uncertainty. Check load and the required crew/team before committing. If the asset becomes unavailable, return to actual passenger/animal capacities and alternatives: repair, unload, replace traction, reroute or walk. A given vehicle is access to a method, not immunity to terrain. Staff report and provide their contracted services; unnamed employees do not supply borrowed follower powers or automatic combat turns.

Example: build and breach a gate

The party builds a **Gate Assembly** as a Large Common project: 12 suitable resources (120g), 2 Workdays of required progress. Each successful daily Crafting TN 4 Test adds one Workday; a retained Crafting maximum adds another. Failure destroys one GM-selected resource and removes one recorded Workday, minimum zero. Replace missing supplies before continuing; consume surviving materials on completion. A Small Common reinforcement uses 3 resources (30g), 1 required Workday, and can raise Durability d8 to d10 while Integrity remains 3.

A properly positioned **Heavy Ram** crew makes one offensive Test, leader Might + d12 Wound. With no material interaction, a completed pool of 10 equals the reinforced gate's Durability maximum and causes no mark; 14 exceeds it and causes one. Three qualifying impacts destroy Integrity 3 and open that gate, not the whole perimeter. A surviving marked gate can be repaired at a Small Common repair per mark: 3 resources (30g), 1 required Workday. Defenders, the operators and exposed positions remain actual participants; a structural roll does not decide their combat.

Structures and sieges

Use these profiles only when a structure becomes a meaningful target. They turn the established Durability and Integrity damage procedure into a runnable Alpha v44 reference without turning ordinary scenes into engineering simulation.

Component	Durability	Integrity	Examples
Light barrier	d4	1	thin door, shutter, improvised barricade
Reinforced barrier	d6	2	heavy door, timber palisade section
Heavy timber / light masonry	d8	3	gate, stone partition, small tower feature
Fortified masonry	d10	4	curtain wall section, fortified gatehouse face
Major fortification	d12	5	keep wall, massive tower base, purpose-built bastion

Siege tools

Tool	Requirement / setup	Effect
Heavy ram	several operators or equivalent force; gate/barrier access	Can damage components up to d10 Durability.
Portable breaker	two hands; close access	Can damage timber and light masonry up to d8 Durability.
Siege engine	crew, ammunition, prepared firing position	Can damage any listed component. A successful damaging hit that exceeds Durability inflicts 2 Durability damage instead of 1.
Magic / extraordinary effect	as written by the source	Can damage a structure when its effect and damage type can plausibly affect that material; use normal damage unless the source states Durability damage.

Fortification upgrade: a meaningful defensive improvement raises either Durability by one die step (maximum d12) or Integrity by 1. A component can normally benefit from each type once unless a later stronghold rule explicitly expands that limit.

After play, discuss specific actions and their effect on participants. Offer a private or anonymous route for concerns where useful; address behavior and agreed expectations rather than personal blame. This feedback adds no character penalty or conduct currency.

Skill scope at the table

For stealth, navigation, animals, work and social pressure, see the [Player Book's Common Skill applications](#). Call only for the consequential uncertainty; a new scene does not create an additional general Skill procedure.

Restoration and a developing threat

The party balances preparation against a Wicked One's opportunity to advance. Start with services and routes that actually exist. Restoring a shipment, workshop, mentor or facility opens a useful option. Record the established result and benefiting settlement; do not invent a parallel shop-development currency.

When a meaningful improvement occurs

Mark one reasonable accomplishment of a Wicked One the party has not directly opposed. It must follow established opportunities and prerequisites. Record the specific benefit or restriction and discoverable evidence. Resolve directly opposed goals through the actual result. Do not update every threat, erase a resolved success or grant a benefit whose dependency the party removed.

Primary and secondary goals

Primary goals justify development toward expected strength; secondary goals permit further development up to that Wicked One's own defined maximum. Record each goal's accomplishment, dependencies, benefit, warning signs and ways to oppose it. Use existing allies, equipment, structures and profile permissions. There is no automatic scaling to party Renown.

Example: restore a workshop or stop a delivery

A recovered workshop gives the party access to repairs. If an unopposed enemy delivery is still plausible, it can equip a named reinforcement group. Record the actual group and equipment rather than increasing every enemy die. Intercepting that delivery denies the benefit. The workshop remains useful even if another route becomes dangerous.

Confrontation and continuation

The party may find the Wicked One at its lair while preparations remain incomplete. If it reaches its defined maximum, its objectives can bring it to confront the party. Completing all goals creates the climax, not an automatic loss. Play the conflict to determine the mortal outcome. Afterward, decide whether survivors continue or new heroes inherit the fallen party's unfinished struggle; do not vote to reverse the outcome.

Running scenes

Investigation

Describe observable evidence and what a sensible examination reveals. Cunning is deliberate inquiry; Perception notices signs. Knowledge supplied by a background or relationship needs no automatic check. Call a roll for the consequential uncertainty, then make its result change what is known or possible. Different clues can point to the same decision.

Conversation

Portray motives, boundaries and what the person actually knows. Presence establishes presentation, Influence seeks voluntary cooperation and Composure resists coercion. Choose the uncertainty at issue. A social result does not create unstated authority, erase player agency or compel obvious lethal risk.

Travel and hazards

Establish route, terrain, time, supplies and rest opportunities. Compress routine safe movement. Use existing Skills for uncertain footing, navigation, exposure and work. A new obstacle should change a decision or cost; it need not introduce a new resolution subsystem. The player **resource-search allowance** and the **hidden opportunity selection** below remain separate.

Opponents

Choose behavior from motive, visible information and printed capabilities. Describe signs of serious danger before the irreversible choice where reasonably possible. Use cover, terrain, objectives and retreat. Roll one appropriate defense per threat and apply its equipment limits. Do not grant generic undead immunities, free spells, infinite brews or extra Actions from a creature's name.

Shared places and campaign records

Keep settlement Reputation and Economic Impact, access and threats on the **Party Sheet**, using **Settlement records**. At a consequential quest or event, apply the protection and support that actually reach the affected target; record the resulting change or loss. Supporting NPCs act in the established fiction while players resolve decisive objectives. Routine guard activity needs no extra checks or counters.

Holding options supply Military Assets, Fortifications and Utilities; **Mounts and Vehicles** supplies transport. **Companion command** governs personal companions. Make appointed authority useful before introducing conflicting demands; allow investigation, negotiation, obedience or defiance. Realm is the final supported scope. **Holdings and Leadership** covers duties and succession.

Reviewing the session

Use the **Session Record** for choices, resource changes, rewards and unresolved rulings. Complete **Playtest Review Questions** with concrete examples and question IDs. Separate a rules ambiguity, a missed reference, an improvised ruling and a balance concern. Written walkthroughs or simulations are not independent table observations. Invite private concerns where helpful and agree the next check without imposing character penalties.

Catalog limits

Only printed permissions govern transport, hired labor and companions. Intelligent or supernatural companions require consent. Exotic vehicles, mass warfare, estate revenue and portal restoration remain separate development work; mundane construction prices do not authorize them.