

AX&X: WARBANDS

Fight as one host, and bring down huge foes. A mass-combat supplement for AX&X.

MANY AGAINST THE MIGHTY

A lone hero cannot fell a giant, and a dragon eats a party of four for breakfast. But fifty spears can bring either down, and so can a wolf pack, a levy of the funnel's survivors, or a company a faction loans you. This supplement runs a crowd as one combatant, a Warband, measured in Hit Dice like any monster, so a group can trade blows with a foe far above its weight.

The idea is borrowed from Mausritter's warbands, fitted to the Hit Dice math AX&X already uses. Nothing here changes an ordinary fight. Reach for it when one side is too many to track one body at a time, or when the thing they face is too big for any single blade.

MUSTERING A WARBAND

- **Who:** Five or more of one kind of fighter under one banner: militia, men-at-arms, a wolf pack, orc raiders, a skeleton legion, a faction levy, or the funnel's mob. One troop type to a warband. A captain or hero rides along as its Commander, not as part of the count.
- **Files:** Count the host in files of five. **Files = members / 5**, rounding down. Spare bodies form a partial file that takes the first losses.
- **Warband HD:** **Files times the member's HD.** This is the host's weight, and everything else scales from it.
- **Mixed Hosts:** Optional. The clean rule is one troop type to a warband, and the examples all run that way. For a mingled host, the GM composes the files and rates each by its strongest member, elites spread evenly so a handful cannot lift the whole, adjudicating as the field demands.

THE WARBAND LINE

Build the host from one member's Bestiary profile and run it as a single creature of its Warband HD.

- **HP:** 5 per HD, fixed. A host does not need the variance of rolled HP.
- **AC:** The member's AC.
- **Attack:** Once per round, **1d20 + HD** against the target.
- **Damage:** The member's damage die + **the Warband HD.** One roll. A bigger host hits harder because it has more HD, not more dice to total.
- **Save:** 10 + HD, like any creature.
- **Keywords:** It keeps what the member has. A skeleton legion stays Mindless and resistant to edged and piercing; wolves hasty; a winged host flies.
- **Recount at the top of its turn:** As files fall, HD, HP, attack, and damage all drop together. Only work them out when the host's turn comes round, never after each hit.

Example: forty men-at-arms are eight files, **Warband HD 8:** HP 40, AC 13, attacking at +8 for 1d6+8. Against a dragon, 8 HD and 40 HP, that is an even match, about four rounds, while the dragon's breath scatters a few files each use.

STRIKING A FOE

The host acts on one initiative. Its attack and damage land on a foe big enough for many to reach at once: a **huge foe** of HD 6 or more, a Large creature, or another warband. The weight of numbers (+HD to hit) lands blows a lone soldier never could, and the deep pool soaks the single great strikes that would end a hero.

Against a lone Medium or smaller foe it is the reverse. A host does not splatter one hero in a swing, no more than a swarm of mice bites through a bear. It cannot bring enough blades to bear, so it closes to **take the quarry** instead.

- **The Chase:** Each round the quarry makes a **DEX check, 12+**, to break clear. Open ground lowers it; close, walled, or dead-end terrain raises it, and a Commander's Focus pushes back.
- **Surrounded:** Ringed, cornered, or run to ground, the quarry is **seized, no roll.**
- **Quarter:** A seized foe is subdued, not slain. A host takes prisoners by preference: captives outvalue corpses, and guards answer to a magistrate. One who fights on from a hopeless corner may be cut down, the GM's call.
- **The Lone Blade:** The reverse holds. A single hero in a host can cut down a file or two a round and slip away, but cannot break the host alone. That is what a warband of their own is for.

BLASTS AND CONDITIONS

A blast does not wipe an army: soldiers shield one another, and a crowd scatters rather than take one stomp whole. A warband is also never itself Poisoned, Paralyzed, Charmed, or Petrified. None of it sits on the host; it all takes out **files**.

- **Footprint:** A breath, a Fireball, a gaze cone, or a gas catches a limited span of files, about its radius in 5-ft steps, not the whole host.
- **Scatter Save:** The warband makes one save. On a success the caught files **scatter**, out of the fight a round, then reform; on a failure they are lost. Files outside the span are untouched.
- **Single-Target:** A touch, a bite, one Charm, or a one-on-one gaze takes out a single file, or, if aimed there, the Commander, who saves alone. A well-placed Hold or Charm on the banner breaks a host without fighting it.
- **By Hit Dice:** An effect that works on so many HD of creatures spends that budget here: Sleep drops a militia's worth of HD, Turn Undead routs Hit Dice of a skeleton legion, each felling whole files.
- **Mass Fear:** A dragon's Fear or a mass Charm is a **Morale check**, not a hundred Frightened soldiers. The Commander may Rally against it.
- **Lasting Harm:** Burning and Poison become attrition: a file's worth of loss each round until it ends or is doused, no status to track.

LOSSES, MORALE, AND RECOVERY

- **Casualties:** Damage removes files from the fight. Below **one file**, the remnant is no longer a warband: it scatters into individuals or routs.

- **Morale:** When the host first loses a quarter of its files, and again at half, the GM rolls 1d6 as the core Morale rule: on 1–3 it breaks. A mindless or sworn host does not check.
- **After the Battle:** Not every fallen file is dead. On a field you hold, **half the lost files** return, knocked down, scattered, or lightly hurt and regrouped. A routed or slaughtered host gets few back, or none.

THE COMMANDER

Each round, in place of their own action, the commander may make a **Command check: 1d20 + CHA + Level, 12+** (an NPC adds its HD instead):

- **Rally:** Shrug off a morale break, or steady a wavering host before it tips.
- **Focus:** +2 to the warband's attack, or +2 to run down a fleeing quarry.
- **Press:** A second warband attack this round. After it, the host tests morale, spent from the effort.

If the commander falls or flees, the host tests morale at once.

WARBAND AGAINST WARBAND

Each attacks the other as above, HD against HD. Or settle it fast: the higher Warband HD wins the clash. The loser sheds Hit Dice equal to the gap between them, and the winner half as much; both turn the lost HD back into fallen files. A Commander's Focus, higher ground, or a clean flank counts as +1 Warband HD for the clash.

RAISING A WARBAND

Five or more of one troop type under a banner, with a Commander over them. A player draws a host from the other supplements.

- **Hire It:** The core Hirelings rule prices a man-at-arms at 5 GP a day. Keep five or more for a warband. They take a half share of XP, and the first order to risk death calls for the loyalty check.
- **A Faction's Levy:** In Powers of the Land, a power at Favored Standing lends you a company. The richest source, and the one that ties a host to the campaign.
- **Rally the Willing:** A CHA check raises 2d6 times five townsfolk or refugees as militia: cheap, HD 1/2, quick to break.
- **Old Comrades:** A Lifepath veteran of the Militia or a Free Company may call the old company to the banner. The funnel's survivors muster as one warband too.

FIELDING A WARBAND

To stat an enemy host or a lent ally, the GM works five steps:

- **Member:** Pick a Bestiary creature: orcs, skeletons, zealots, bandits, dwarves.
- **Count:** Set it to the Files and Warband HD you want, near the party for a fair fight, above it for a foe to flee or parley with.
- **Line:** Build the warband line as above, inheriting the member's keywords.
- **Banner:** Name a Commander and a goal, which decides whether the host kills, captures, or can be bought off.
- **Disposition:** Adversary or ally. An ally is the same build turned friendly, a faction's loan or paid hirelings, run by the GM or handed to a player.

SAMPLE WARBANDS

One member line each. Derive Files, HD, and the rest at the table.

- **Town Militia:** Member HD 1/2, HP 2, AC 11, d6. Grudging, quick to break. Musters 2d6 times five.
- **Men-at-Arms:** Member HD 1, HP 6, AC 13, d6. Paid and drilled. 5 to 20 under a captain.
- **Veteran Company:** Member HD 2, HP 12, AC 15, d8. 10 to 40, slow to rout.
- **Wolf Pack:** Member HD 1, HP 5, AC 13, d4. 2d6 strong, harries and surrounds.
- **Orc Warhost:** Member HD 1, HP 5, AC 13, d8. 20 to 60 off the Red March.
- **Skeleton Legion:** Member HD 1, HP 5, AC 13, d6. Mindless, never breaks, as many as the necromancer raised.

1D8 WARBAND GOALS

Why a host is in the field. It tells you what the warband wants, and whether it fights, captures, or deals.

- 1 Raid:** Burn, loot, and be gone before the muster. It kills who resists and carries off the rest.
- 2 Siege:** Holding a place under, patient and hungry for a way past the walls.
- 3 Hunt:** After one person or party. It wants a capture, and will deal to get it.
- 4 Tribute:** Here to collect, in coin, grain, or blood. Pay and it moves on.
- 5 Crusade:** A cause or a vengeance. It does not deal, and does not break easily.
- 6 Muster:** Still gathering, not yet committed. Weak now, and open to being bought off or beaten to the punch.
- 7 Escort:** Guarding a charge: a person, a wagon, a relic. It fights only to protect it, and flees with it.
- 8 Broken:** A routed host turned bandit or refugee. Desperate, leaderless, and dangerous for it.

1D8 WAR MISHAPS

Between battles, or when a host idles too long. Roll when a warband's loyalty or luck is tested.

- 1 Desertion:** A file slips away in the night. Lose one file, with no recovery.
- 2 Feud:** Two factions in the ranks come to blows. -1 to the host's morale until it is settled.
- 3 Camp Fever:** Sickness runs the tents. The host fights at half strength until a week's rest.
- 4 A Challenge:** A rival calls out the Commander. Answer it, or take -2 to Command checks until you do.
- 5 Empty Stores:** Out of pay or rations. A morale check now, and each day until resupplied.
- 6 A Defector:** Someone sells your plans, or your position, to the enemy.
- 7 Loot Dispute:** A quarrel over spoils. A CHA check settles it, or a file walks.
- 8 A Hero Rises:** One soldier shines: a named lieutenant worth +1 to one Command check a battle, or a future character.

1D6 COMMANDER TRAITS

Roll or pick for an NPC leader. A PC commands as themselves.

- 1 Bold:** Presses when it should hold. +2 to a charging attack, -2 to the first morale check.
- 2 Cautious:** Hard to break, slow to commit. +2 to morale, but never Presses.
- 3 Beloved:** The ranks adore them. Rally works on any success, and the host holds a step longer.
- 4 Cruel:** Feared, not loved. +2 to steady a wavering host, but it kills prisoners and parley is hard.

5 Green: New to command. -2 to Command checks until the host wins a battle.

6 Cunning: Reads a field well. Once a battle, turn a failed Command check into a success.

1D6 SPOILS OF THE FIELD

What a beaten host leaves. Roll on a field you hold.

1 Arms: Salvage weapons and armor for 2d6 files, or sell them for 1d6 x 100 GP.

2 War Chest: The host's pay and plunder: one core Treasure roll.

3 Prisoners: Captives to ransom, press, or free. Each is worth 2d6 x 10 GP, or a favor.

4 The Banner: A standard, relic, or warrant. Standing with whoever wants it, or a named item.

5 A Defector: A survivor turns coat, a file or a lieutenant, if treated well.

6 Only the Ground: The dead were stripped first. You hold the field and nothing else.

BLOODING AND SHARES

After a fight, tally the take, and see what the host has become.

- **The Climb:** A host rises on a ladder: **raw recruit, green, blooded, seasoned, veteran**. Recruit and green are the untried; the rest are earned. A grade up lifts the member line one rung, Militia to Men-at-Arms to Veteran Company, Elite at the GM's gift.
- **Blooded:** A host is blooded when it comes through real peril still standing: a stand against a huge foe, or a host of its own weight or heavier, where the banner might have fallen. Each such passage earns an Honor. Routine slaughter of lesser foes earns none.
- **Veteran:** At three Honors a standing host steps up a grade, keeps its files, and resets. A veteran is a host, or a soldier, that has served out a term or a hard campaign, the same veteran the Lifepath musters out.
- **Disbanded:** A host raised from volunteers for one task and let go cannot hold a grade. Its Honors turn honorary: a battle-name, a banner's fame, Standing with all who marched. Real in the fiction, no line on a sheet.
- **Carried Home:** The growth rides home on the survivors, capped so it never stacks. Each PC who stood through the peril takes one roll or pick on the Lifepath Benefits table, at most once per host. The GM may instead raise one named survivor a grade as a veteran, and keep that one's bookkeeping.
- **The Reckoning:** Tally 25 XP per Hit Die beaten, counting an enemy host by its Warband HD, plus Spoils as 1 GP to 1 XP. The warband draws a single half-share as a body for its keep, however many stand in it, and the rest splits among the party as usual.