

PENANCE

Deck Construction Rules

Absolution Through Steel

Generated deck-construction

Deck Construction Rules

Penance: Absolution Through Steel

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Core Principle

Your deck IS your Casket. Cards represent equipment, actions, and damage. Building your deck is customizing your war machine.

Universal Deck Construction Rules

Mandatory Components

Every deck must contain:

1. **Exactly 10 Universal Cards** (see [universal-cards.md](#)) - 3 Movement cards - 3 Defense cards - 3 Utility cards - 1 Wild card - **Cannot be removed or swapped** (core Casket functions)
2. **Right Arm equipment** (weapon, shield, or tool)
3. **Left Arm equipment** (weapon, shield, or tool)
4. **Relic slots** (0-3 depending on weight class)

Card Copy Limits

Maximum 2 copies of any single card in your deck

Exception: Universal cards appear once each (only 1 copy allowed)

How duplicates occur: - Equipping 2 of the same weapon (e.g., dual daggers, 2 longswords) - Equipping mirrored equipment (Right + Left Arm) - Some relics grant duplicate cards

Example: - Equip Longsword (Right Arm): Adds 4 unique cards - Equip Longsword (Left Arm): Adds 4 cards (some duplicates of Right Arm cards) - Result: Some cards appear twice in deck (legal)

Deck Size Formula

Base Deck = 10 Universal Cards + Equipment Cards

Equipment cards vary by what you equip: - Each weapon adds 3-5 cards - Each shield adds 2-3 cards - Each relic adds 2-4 cards - Source Conduit arms add 5 spell cards (fixed)

Final deck size depends on: - Weight class (determines max equipment cards) - Equipment choices (each piece adds cards)

See weight class templates below for specifics.

Weight Class Templates

Scout (500-800 lbs)

Total Deck Size: 22-26 cards

Starting Hand Size: 6 cards

Soul-Points (Safe Zone): 5 SP

Equipment Slots: - Right Arm: 1 slot - Left Arm: 1 slot - Relic Slots: 1 slot

Deck Composition: - Universal Cards: **10** (mandatory) - Right Arm Equipment: **3-5 cards** - Left Arm Equipment: **3-5 cards** - Relic Slot: **2-4 cards** - Optional Racial Cards: **0-2 cards** (if applicable)

Equipment Budget: 12-16 equipment cards max

Philosophy: Fast, agile, evasive. Minimal armor, maximum mobility.

Example Scout Deck (24 cards total):

Universal Cards (10):

- Desperate Lunge, Warden's Pivot, Ironstrider's Rush
- Unyielding Bulwark, Second Skin, Guardian's Defiance
- Breathe the Core, Field Suture, Soul's Recall
- Tattered Hope

Right Arm - Rapier (4 cards):

- Flicker Strike (1 SP, 2 dmg, melee, Init 2)
- Precise Thrust (2 SP, 3 dmg, melee, Init 3)
- Riposte (0 SP, reactive, 2 dmg counter, Init -)
- Dancing Blade (1 SP, 2 dmg + move 1 hex, Init 1)

Left Arm - Buckler (3 cards):

- Deflecting Arc (+1 Defense front arc, 0 SP, reactive)
- Parry Stance (+2 Defense until next turn, 1 SP, Init 4)
- Shield Bash (1 SP, 1 dmg + push 1 hex, melee, Init 3)

Relic - Jump Jets (3 cards):

- Aerial Leap (2 SP, move 3 hexes ignoring terrain, +2 Heat, Init 1)
- Sky Drop (2 SP, move + 2 dmg to landing hex, +1 Heat, Init 2)
- Evasive Boost (1 SP, +2 Defense until next turn, +1 Heat, reactive)

Racial - Human Vow of Wrath (1 card):

- Righteous Fury (0 SP, +1 dmg all attacks this turn, take 1 dmg)

Total: 10 + 4 + 3 + 3 + 1 = 21 cards

Customization: Swap Buckler for Dagger (4 cards), swap Jump Jets for Grappling Hook (3 cards), etc.

Support (900-1,200 lbs)

Total Deck Size: 26-32 cards

Starting Hand Size: 6 cards

Soul-Points (Safe Zone): 4 SP

Equipment Slots: - Right Arm: 1 slot - Left Arm: 1 slot - Relic Slots: 2 slots

Deck Composition: - Universal Cards: **10** (mandatory) - Right Arm Equipment: **3-5 cards** - Left Arm Equipment: **3-5 cards** - Relic Slot 1: **2-4 cards** - Relic Slot 2: **2-4 cards** - Optional Racial Cards: **0-2 cards**

Equipment Budget: 16-22 equipment cards max

Philosophy: Force multiplier. Buffs allies, heals, controls areas. Weaker alone.

Example Support Deck (28 cards total):

Universal Cards (10): Standard 10**Right Arm - Mace (4 cards):**

- Crushing Blow (2 SP, 4 dmg, melee, Init 5)
- Sweeping Strike (2 SP, 2 dmg to all adjacent, melee, Init 6)
- Staggering Hit (2 SP, 3 dmg + target loses 1 SP next turn, Init 5)
- Overhead Smash (3 SP, 5 dmg, melee, Init 7)

Left Arm - Tower Shield (3 cards):

- Fortress Stance (+2 Defense front arc, 0 SP, reactive)
- Protective Advance (1 SP, move 1 hex + adjacent ally gains +1 Defense, Init 4)
- Shield Wall (2 SP, +3 Defense until next turn, cannot move, Init 5)

Relic 1 - Repair Kit (3 cards):

- Emergency Patch (2 SP, remove 1 Damage card from ally's discard, Init 4)
- Field Overhaul (3 SP, ally draws 2 cards, Init 5)
- Reinforcing Struts (1 SP, ally gains +1 Defense next attack, Init 3)

Relic 2 - Banner of Valor (4 cards):

- Rallying Cry (1 SP, all allies within 3 hexes gain +1 SP this turn, Init 2)
- Inspiring Presence (0 SP, adjacent ally may play 1 extra card this turn, Init 1)
- Stalwart Resolve (2 SP, all allies within 2 hexes gain +1 Defense, Init 3)
- Desperate Gambit (1 SP, ally may reroll 1 Strain Table result, Init -)

Racial - Elven Symbiosis (passive):

- No extra cards, but remove 1 Damage card from discard at end of round

Total: 10 + 4 + 3 + 3 + 4 = 24 cards

Customization: Swap Banner for Smoke Launchers (area denial), swap Mace for Spear (reach), etc.

Heavy (1,300-1,800 lbs)

Total Deck Size: 32-38 cards

Starting Hand Size: 6 cards

Soul-Points (Safe Zone): 3 SP

Equipment Slots: - Right Arm: 1 slot - Left Arm: 1 slot - Relic Slots: 3 slots

Deck Composition: - Universal Cards: **10** (mandatory) - Right Arm Equipment: **4-6 cards** - Left Arm Equipment: **3-5 cards** - Relic Slot 1: **2-4 cards** - Relic Slot 2: **2-4 cards** - Relic Slot 3: **2-4 cards** - Optional Racial Cards: **0-2 cards**

Equipment Budget: 22-28 equipment cards max

Philosophy: Frontline anchor. Thick armor, sustained fire, controls space through presence.

Example Heavy Deck (34 cards total):

Universal Cards (10): Standard 10

Right Arm - Great Shield (4 cards):

- Impenetrable Wall (+3 Defense front arc, 0 SP, reactive)
- Shield Charge (2 SP, move 2 hexes + 3 dmg to target, melee, Init 6)
- Bulwark Hold (1 SP, +4 Defense, cannot move/rotate until next turn, Init 5)
- Shield Slam (2 SP, 2 dmg + push 2 hexes, melee, Init 5)

Left Arm - Warhammer (5 cards):

- Thunderous Blow (2 SP, 5 dmg, melee, Init 6)
- Earthshaker (3 SP, 4 dmg + all adjacent hexes take 1 dmg, melee, +1 Heat, Init 7)
- Crushing Impact (2 SP, 4 dmg, ignore 1 Defense, melee, Init 6)
- Hammer Down (3 SP, 6 dmg, cannot move next turn, melee, Init 8)
- Defensive Swing (1 SP, 2 dmg, +1 Defense until next turn, melee, Init 4)

Relic 1 - Ablative Plating (3 cards):

- Reactive Armor (0 SP, reduce next attack damage by 2, reactive)
- Reinforced Hull (1 SP, +2 Defense until end of round, Init 4)
- Emergency Plating (2 SP, ignore next 3 damage, Init -)

Relic 2 - Gyro-Stabilizers (3 cards):

- Steady Footing (0 SP, ignore forced movement/rotation, reactive)
- Anchored Stance (1 SP, cannot be moved or pushed until next turn, Init 3)
- Precision Targeting (1 SP, ignore partial cover this turn, Init 2)

Relic 3 - Emergency Vents (3 cards):

- Rapid Cooling (2 SP, remove 1d3+1 Heat, Init 3)
- Heat Sink (0 SP, remove 1 Heat, reactive when gaining Heat)
- Thermal Purge (1 SP, remove all Heat, cannot attack next turn, Init 4)

Total: 10 + 4 + 5 + 3 + 3 + 3 = 28 cards

Customization: Swap Great Shield for Ballista Arm (ranged), swap Emergency Vents for Fortress Armor (more Defense), etc.

Assault (1,900-2,500 lbs)

Total Deck Size: 36-42 cards

Starting Hand Size: 6 cards

Soul-Points (Safe Zone): 2 SP

Equipment Slots: - Right Arm: 1 slot - Left Arm: 1 slot - Relic Slots: 3 slots

Deck Composition: - Universal Cards: **10** (mandatory) - Right Arm Equipment: **5-7 cards** - Left Arm Equipment: **4-6 cards** - Relic Slot 1: **3-5 cards** - Relic Slot 2: **3-5 cards** - Relic Slot 3: **2-4 cards** - Optional Racial Cards: **0-2 cards**

Equipment Budget: 26-32 equipment cards max

Philosophy: Walking apocalypse. Devastating firepower, nearly indestructible, reshapes battlefield.

Example Assault Deck (38 cards total):

Universal Cards (10): Standard 10

Right Arm - Siege Ballista (6 cards):

- Siege Shot (3 SP, 6 dmg, Long range, Init 8)
- Piercing Bolt (2 SP, 5 dmg ignore armor, Medium range, Init 7)
- Suppressing Fire (3 SP, 4 dmg + target loses 1 SP next turn, Medium, Init 7)
- Explosive Payload (4 SP, 5 dmg + 2 dmg to adjacent hexes, Long, +2 Heat, Init 9)
- Aimed Strike (2 SP, 4 dmg, called shot no penalty, Long, Init 6)
- Reload (1 SP, draw 2 cards, Init 5)

Left Arm - Great Shield (4 cards):

- [Same as Heavy example above, shortened to 4 cards]

Relic 1 - Reinforced Frame (4 cards):

- Immovable Object (0 SP, ignore forced movement, reactive)
- Titanium Plating (+3 Defense until next turn, 2 SP, Init 5)
- Structural Integrity (1 SP, ignore next Chassis damage, reactive)
- Armored Advance (2 SP, move 1 hex + gain +2 Defense, Init 6)

Relic 2 - Seismic Anchors (4 cards):

- Brace Protocols (1 SP, root in place, +4 Defense, cannot move until next turn, Init 4)
- Tremor Blast (2 SP, all adjacent enemies take 2 dmg, +1 Heat, Init 6)
- Earthquake (3 SP, 3 dmg to all enemies within 2 hexes, +2 Heat, Init 8)
- Unshakable (0 SP, prevent 1 forced movement, reactive)

Relic 3 - Coolant System (3 cards):

- Emergency Cooling (2 SP, remove 2d3 Heat, Init 4)
- Heat Dispersal (1 SP, remove 2 Heat, Init 3)
- Thermal Regulators (passive, -1 Heat at end of round)

Total: 10 + 6 + 4 + 4 + 4 + 3 = 31 cards

Customization: Swap Siege Ballista for Giant Maul (melee devastation), swap Coolant for Reactor Overdrive (more power, more risk), etc.

Aberrant (600-1,500 lbs Variable)

Total Deck Size: 26-32 cards

Starting Hand Size: 6 cards

Soul-Points (Safe Zone): 3 SP

Equipment Slots: - Right Arm: 1 slot - Left Arm: 1 slot - Relic Slots: 2 slots

Deck Composition: - Universal Cards: **10** (mandatory) - Right Arm Equipment: **3-5 cards** - Left Arm Equipment: **3-5 cards** - Relic Slot 1: **3-5 cards** (often corruption-themed) - Relic Slot 2: **2-4 cards** - **Warp Flux Cards: 2-4 cards** (unique to Aberrant)

Equipment Budget: 16-22 equipment cards max

Philosophy: Reality-breaking. Unpredictable movement, bypasses defenses, high corruption cost.

Example Aberrant Deck (28 cards total):

Universal Cards (10): Standard 10

Right Arm - Blade Arm (Integrated, 4 cards):

- Rending Slash (2 SP, 4 dmg, melee, Init 4)
- Void Strike (2 SP, 3 dmg ignore Defense, melee, +1 Taint, Init 3)
- Flurry of Cuts (3 SP, 2 dmg x3 (resolve separately), melee, +1 Heat, Init 5)
- Corrupted Edge (1 SP, 3 dmg + gain 1 Taint, target gains 1 Taint, melee, Init 4)

Left Arm - Void Shield (4 cards):

- Phase Defense (0 SP, negate next attack by teleporting 1 hex, +1 Taint, reactive)
- Reality Warp (+2 Defense, attacks against you may hit random adjacent target instead, 1 SP)
- Dimensional Barrier (1 SP, +3 Defense until next turn, +1 Taint, Init 4)
- Absorb Blow (0 SP, reduce damage by 2, gain 1 Taint, reactive)

Relic 1 - Warp Anchor (4 cards):

- Blink (2 SP, teleport up to 3 hexes, ignore terrain, +1 Taint, Init 2)
- Phase Shift (1 SP, teleport 1 hex, ignore facing change, +1 Taint, Init 1)
- Dimensional Step (2 SP, teleport to any hex within LOS, +2 Taint, +2 Heat, Init 3)
- Void Walk (1 SP, move through enemies, +1 Taint, Init 2)

Relic 2 - Mutation Catalyst (3 cards):

- Rapid Evolution (1 SP, draw 2 cards, gain 1 Taint, Init 3)
- Adaptive Form (2 SP, choose: +2 Defense OR +2 dmg next attack, +1 Taint, Init 4)
- Writhing Limbs (1 SP, +1 melee attack range this turn, +1 Taint, Init 2)

Warp Flux (Aberrant Unique, 3 cards):

- Reality Fracture (2 SP, roll 1d6: 1-2 = teleport random, 3-4 = +3 dmg next attack, 5-6 = +1 Heat)
- Chaos Burst (3 SP, deal 1d6 damage to random target within 3 hexes (may be ally or self))
- Void Corruption (1 SP, all adjacent units gain 1 Taint (including allies), you gain 2 Taint)

Total: 10 + 4 + 4 + 4 + 3 + 3 = 28 cards

Note: Aberrant decks gain Taint rapidly. High risk, high reward. Transformation to Abomination (10 Taint) is real threat.

Special Equipment Rules

Two-Handed Weapons

Some weapons require both arms (Greatsword, Giant Maul, Ballista Arm)

Rules: - Takes up BOTH Right Arm AND Left Arm slots - Cannot equip shield or second weapon - Adds 5-7 cards total (larger card pool than single weapon) - Usually higher damage, slower initiative

Example: Greatsword (Two-Hand) - Occupies Right + Left Arm slots - Adds 6 cards to deck - Cannot use shield or dual-wield

Source Conduit Arms

Magical prosthetic arms that cast spells instead of wielding weapons

Rules: - Replaces Right OR Left Arm slot - Adds **exactly 5 spell cards** from chosen school - **+1 Hand Size** (total 7 cards in hand) - Choose spell school: Fire, Ice, Lightning, Void, Nature

Example: Source Conduit (Right Arm) - Fire School - Adds 5 Fire spell cards - Hand size becomes 7 - Left Arm can still equip weapon/shield

See [equipment-catalog.md](#) for spell school details.

Relic Tech (Ammo/Charges)

Some relics use limited ammo (rifles, rockets, grenades)

Rules: - Start mission with X ammo tokens (usually 3-5) - Cards require spending 1 ammo token to play - Cannot play card if no ammo remaining - Ammo does NOT refresh during mission - Can be resupplied between missions (campaign mode)

Example: Thunderspeaker Rifle (Relic Tech) - Start with 5 Ammo tokens - Each shot costs 1 Ammo - After 5 shots, rifle cards are unplayable - Still in deck (dilution), but can't use them

Racial Unique Cards

Some races get unique cards that reflect their abilities

Rules: - **Optional:** Not required, but available - Add 0-2 racial cards to deck (doesn't count against equipment budget) - Must meet requirements (e.g., Undead Death's Door requires 3+ Taint start)

Examples:

Human - Vow Cards: - 1 card per Vow chosen (max 1 Vow per mission) - Adds restriction + bonus card

Undead - Soul Reserve: - Separate 5-card emergency deck (not in main deck) - Drawn when triggering Death's Door ability

Orcish - Scrap Fury: - Passive ability (no cards added) - Bonuses increase per reshuffle

Fae - Bargain Cards: - 2 cards (Invoke Bargain, Pay Price) - Adds risky burst potential

Deck Building Process (Step-by-Step)

Step 1: Choose Weight Class

- Scout, Support, Heavy, Assault, or Aberrant
- Determines Safe Zone SP, deck size range, relic slots

Step 2: Choose Race

- Human, Elf, Dwarf, Orc, Undead, Fae, Draconid

- Determines racial ability and potential unique cards

Step 3: Equip Right Arm

- Weapon, shield, or tool
- Note how many cards it adds (3-5 typically)

Step 4: Equip Left Arm

- Weapon, shield, or tool
- OR: Skip if using Two-Handed weapon
- Note how many cards it adds

Step 5: Equip Relics

- Fill relic slots (1-3 depending on weight class)
- Balance utility vs power vs ammo management
- Note cards added per relic

Step 6: Add Racial Cards (Optional)

- If your race has unique cards, decide if you want them
- Add 0-2 racial cards

Step 7: Add Universal Cards

- Automatically add all 10 Universal cards
- These are mandatory, cannot be changed

Step 8: Calculate Total Deck Size

- Count: 10 Universal + all equipment cards + racial cards
- Verify it's within your weight class range
- Example: Scout deck = 10 + 4 (rapier) + 3 (buckler) + 3 (jump jets) + 1 (racial) = 21 cards ✓ (within 22-26 range)

Step 9: Double-Check Duplicates

- No more than 2 copies of any card
- Universal cards = 1 copy each (automatic)

Step 10: Shuffle and Play!

- Shuffle your deck
- Draw starting hand (6 cards)
- Begin mission

Deck Building Restrictions (Tournament Legal)

For competitive play:

1. **Weight Class Limits** (see templates above)
2. **No Homebrew** (only official/approved equipment)
3. **Relic Tech Limit:** Max 1 ammo-based relic per deck (prevents all-guns build)
4. **Corruption Gear Limit:** Max 3 “Tainted” or “Forbidden” keyword cards (prevents nova-corruption)
5. **Racial Lock:** Must use racial ability matching your Casket aesthetic (human can’t use orcish Scrap Fury)

For casual play: Ignore restrictions, have fun!

Campaign Deck Building

Between missions, you can modify your deck:

Workshop (Spending Credits)

- **Buy new equipment:** 100-500 Credits (see [equipment-catalog.md](#))
- **Swap equipment:** Free (if you own multiple pieces)
- **Repair damaged components:** 50/150/500 Credits

Deck Modifications

- Swap Right/Left Arm equipment
- Swap relics
- Adjust loadout for next mission

Permanent Damage

- If component disabled (9+ damage), must replace equipment
- Lose access to those cards until replaced
- Can buy replacement at Workshop

See [campaign-progression.md](#) for full details.

Common Deck Archetypes

“Glass Cannon” (Scout)

- Dual-wield weapons (rapier + dagger)
- No shield
- Jump jets for mobility
- High damage, zero defense
- **Risk:** One rear attack = death

“Fortress” (Heavy)

- Great Shield + Warhammer

- All 3 relics = defensive (plating, stabilizers, vents)
- Immovable, absorbent
- **Risk:** Slow, can be avoided/kited

“Support Medic” (Support)

- Tower Shield + Light Mace
- Repair Kit + Banner + Medical Supplies relics
- Keeps team alive
- **Risk:** Weak solo, dies if isolated

“Berserker” (Assault + Orcish)

- Two-Handed Giant Maul (both arms)
- Reactor Overdrive + Scrap Plating + Berserker Implant
- Scrap Fury scaling damage
- High Heat generation
- **Risk:** Self-destructive, meltdown likely

“Void Mage” (Aberrant)

- Source Conduit (Void School)
- Warp Anchor + Mutation Catalyst
- Teleport spamming, corruption stacking
- **Risk:** Transformation to Abomination at 10 Taint

Deck Building Tips

For New Players

1. **Start with balanced builds** (1 weapon, 1 shield, 1 utility relic)
2. **Don't over-specialize** (all offense or all defense = weak)

3. **Track your deck size** (count cards as you add equipment)
4. **Read Universal cards carefully** (they're 40-50% of Scout decks!)

For Experienced Players

1. **Plan for reshuffles** (how fast will you cycle? How many Damage cards can you handle?)
2. **Synergy matters** (Scrap Fury Orcish + lots of cheap cards = fast reshuffles = stacking damage)
3. **Know your role** (Arena 2v2 needs 1 damage dealer + 1 support, not 2 glass cannons)
4. **Count SP efficiency** (Scout's 5 SP vs Assault's 2 SP changes card value)

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Can I have a 50-card deck?

A: No. Follow weight class deck size ranges (Scout: 22-26, Heavy: 32-38, etc.). Larger decks dilute combos and delay reshuffles (less Scrap Fury triggers, slower Damage card accumulation).

Q: Can I remove Universal cards?

A: No. All 10 Universal cards are mandatory. They represent core Casket functions.

Q: Can I have 3 copies of one card?

A: No. Max 2 copies per card.

Q: What if I equip no weapons?

A: Legal but unwise. You'd have only Universal cards + relics. Can still win via objectives, but combat-weak.

Q: Can I change my deck mid-mission?

A: No. Deck is locked once mission starts. You can only add Damage cards (from injuries).

Q: Do Damage cards count toward deck size?

A: No. Base deck size is pre-mission. Damage cards are added during mission when you reshuffle after taking component damage.

Quick Reference: Deck Size Ranges

Weight Class	Deck Size	Universal	Equipment Budget	Relic Slots
Scout	22-26	10	12-16	1
Support	26-32	10	16-22	2
Heavy	32-38	10	22-28	3
Assault	36-42	10	26-32	3
Aberrant	26-32	10	16-22	2

Next Steps

- See [equipment-catalog.md](#) for weapon/shield/relic stats
- See [universal-cards.md](#) for the 10 mandatory cards
- See [turn-structure.md](#) for how to play your deck
- See [damage-system.md](#) for how Damage cards work

“Build your tomb of iron. Make it worthy of the battles to come.”