



# Taking It To The Streets

A Mordheim Primer by Mark Havener

**So you're looking to get into a new game. Walk into the local store, and you're assaulted with the selection. All the pretty boxes, all the lovely titles, which one to buy? You ask the guy behind the counter, and he suggests that Mordheim is a good choice if you want to try something new. So you take his advice and buy yourself a new game, but now that you've got it, how exactly do you start using it?**

*The rules, the rules, always read the rules!*

This may seem obvious, but the book that comes with the game really needs to be read. Many players try to get by with having someone show them how to play, promising they'll read the rules later. There's nothing wrong with doing this, though you may miss the finer points, and some things inevitably get lost in translation (even those sales guys don't remember all the rules all the time!). Fortunately, the rules

for Mordheim were written with the understanding that most people want to be playing games not reading rules, and so they're as entertaining as possible. They're also broken down into 5 sections – the introductory (story) bit, Rules, Warbands, Campaigns, and Optional Rules. The sections you really need to read are Rules and Warbands, though the introductory section is highly recommended before you start as well, as it gives much of the backstory



## Human Mercenaries

There are several minor (provincial) variations within this list, but they're all basically the same thing – human fighters from one of the provinces of the Empire. Human Mercenaries should be viewed as the 'baseline' warband: they aren't the greatest at any given thing, but they can do most things well. They have reasonably priced Heroes, decent warriors and very cool specialists. Marksmen can take some really nice missile weapons, and Swordsmen have a great Weapon Skill for humans, and get to re-roll missed attacks when they charge!

You should decide when you buy your warband whether you want to emphasise shooting, close combat, or a mix of both. If you favour shooting, you will want to choose Reikland as your warband's home province, as all your Marksmen will be more accurate (+1 Ballistic Skill). If you want to emphasise close combat you'll probably want to go with Middenheimers as their Heroes are stronger than other humans (+1 Strength for their Champions and Captains). If you want a mix of both you'll want Marienburgers, as they are from a wealthier province and therefore get more starting cash to recruit with (600 Gold Crowns rather than the normal 500... not too shabby!). Personally, I normally choose Marienburgers when I play Human Mercenaries, as they fit best with the flexible strategy I like to use.





### Averlanders and Ostlanders

In addition to the three types of Human Mercenary in the rulebook (opposite), two more types appear in the pages of the Mordheim Annual 2002. Each follows the same basic format as the Human Mercenary warband, with a twist of its own.

Averlanders are restricted to only one each of Youngbloods and Champions (called a Sergeant in this list), but gain Bergjaegers, expert huntsmen who have the ability to set traps. Instead of Warriors and Swordsman, they have Mountainguard, who have the Weapon Skill of Swordsman but lack their re-rolls. The warband also has access to Halflings, who are excellent shots (keep them away from combat though, as they are kind of puny).

Ostlanders lose Youngbloods entirely, but gain the Priest of Taal, God of Nature. This Hero is able to use the Prayers of Taal (nature-oriented powers granted directly from his god). The warband loses Swordsman, but gains Ruffians (guys that are so drunk that they ain't afraid a nuthin'), and an Ogre!



behind the game – your 'motivation' if you like. There is also an example at the back of the book (in the appendices, between the Playsheet and the Designer's Notes) that may prove very helpful if you've never played this sort of game before.

That may still seem like a lot to read before you even start to play, but never fear! You don't have to read all the Warband rules. Instead, just read the first couple of pages (pp 64-65) where it explains how to set your warband up, and then look over each warband (especially the intro on each one), decide which warband fits your personality best, and then read through THOSE rules thoroughly. Most of the warbands have rules that span just a few pages, so it'll go really quickly, I promise! In fact, in order to help you out, I'll be including a few words on each warband from the main rulebook and

Mordheim Annual 2002 (in other words, the main references for the game, and easiest to find) in this article. Hopefully this will make the job of picking the right one for you even easier.

### The Players

So who are these warbands that you're supposed to be looking at, and how do you decide which one to play? Let me start by saying that I'm not going to tell you which warband is 'best'. I've been asked that countless times, but the honest answer (and the one I always give people) is that the game is well balanced enough so that no one warband is 'the best'. Some warbands have certain advantages, but these are balanced by inherent disadvantages, or the advantages that the other warbands enjoy. See the comments in the boxes throughout this article.







### Kislevites

Kislev is the land to the north (and east) of the Empire. The combination of a harsh climate and proximity to the Chaos Wastes has hardened the people of this land. Like Averlanders and Ostlanders, Kislevites are similar to Human Mercenary warbands, but have some differences. For instance, they lose one Champion (called an Esaul in this warband), but gain a Bear Tamer. And while they don't have access to Swordsmen or Marksmen, they gain Cossacks (who Hate Chaos), Streltsi (who have received special training with the halberd and handgun), and (if the warband includes a Trainer) a Trained Bear (another 'big guy' like the Ogre above).

### Hired Swords

Many of the best warriors in the game aren't regular members of any single warband's roster. They are Hired Swords – warriors who will work for nearly anyone (for a fee). Between the Rulebook and the 2002 Mordheim Annual there are 10 Hired Swords to choose from.

Hired Swords are probably best introduced into a campaign rather than one-off games. They have a lower starting hire fee than their abilities indicate, but this is balanced by an 'upkeep' cost. However, if you are not playing in a campaign, there is no upkeep cost, so they just end up being a better option than most of the warriors in your warband. Another thing to keep in mind is that while these folks are not overly choosy, there ARE some warbands that even they won't work

for (or that would refuse to hire them). Skaven and Ostlanders in particular have a very short list of Hired Swords to choose from, in fact Skaven can ONLY hire the Warlock, and Ostlanders can ONLY hire the Ogre Bodyguard.

Speaking of the Warlock, this snake charmer is one of my personal favourites, and a standard addition to my Mordheim roster. Not only does he give warbands access to spells (nice if you're running a warband that doesn't normally get spellcasters), but he also starts with 2 of them, not just 1 like most of the spellcasters. He has access to Lesser Magic, which gives a nice range of powers. My favourite spell from the list is *Silver Arrows*, which can take out the toughest of enemies if you're lucky. Since the spell requires a shooting 'to hit' roll, take a BS upgrade if you can

### Orcs & Goblins

Players that love a bit of wackiness and risk should enjoy this warband. Orcs are certainly no great thinkers, but they're always entertaining. Orc warbands tend to favour a direct, close-combat strategy, perhaps supported by a few Goblins armed with short bows. Their Shaman's magic shares the same brutal and direct qualities as the Orcs themselves.

To further support the idea of the warband as a blunt implement, we get access to a Troll. While quite expensive, Trolls are very hard to put down, and as long as you keep him near the warband's leader, he'll probably do what you want him to (he's also subject to Stupidity, unfortunately). A nice side effect of his Regeneration in campaign play is that a Troll need never roll for Injury after a battle... even the worst wounds will regenerate eventually. While most of the big guys you can take for the other warbands are also quite pricey, there's a certain advantage to having the one that can never be killed!





get it. Also, *Luck of Sbemtek* and *Sword of Rezhebel* are an awesome combination if you can manage to get them both working at the same time.

The Dwarf Troll Slayer is a great addition to any warband that is concerned about Psychology tests. He's quite mad, and so doesn't need to take those tests. He can't take armour, so get him into combat as quickly as you can!

The Freelancer is a dispossessed noble or second son of a noble. Quite good if your group uses the Mounted Creatures rules (which are optional), but he may seem a bit overpriced if you're not. Armed with heavy armour and shield, he'll be better protected than most of the warriors he'll meet, and more mobile if he's mounted.

The Elf Ranger is a nice addition to any warband. Not only is he wickedly accurate with his Elf bow, but his Seeker skill allows you to modify one of your Exploration dice by +1/-1. In a campaign, this can be critical for rolling the multiples that you need to find the really good stuff. He is a standard feature in my warbands as well.



The Halfling Scout, while quite cheap at 15 GC, probably isn't a best first choice for your warband. He's a decent shot with his bow, but his most useful trait is his Cook skill, which lets you increase the maximum size of your warband by 1 warrior.

This skill really comes into play late in a campaign when you've filled up your roster and cannot hire any more (aside from Hired Swords who don't count towards this limit).

The Pit Fighter is quite good at what he does, at least for a human. He's got a decent Strength (4), Toughness (4), and Attacks (2), and some interesting and different equipment (a morning star, helmet, and a spiked gauntlet which counts as both an additional hand weapon AND a buckler). At 30 GC he's a good deal, but he doesn't have any useful skills and his lowly 1 Wound and mediocre Ld mean that he doesn't often make it into my warbands.

The Ogre Bodyguard on the other hand, woohoo! Here's a big guy that doesn't have a typical big guy price tag (80 GC, which is about half what you'd normally pay for a big guy who is part of your warband). His upkeep cost is pretty high though, and in a campaign that can be critical as lots of



### Witch Hunters

Mercenaries aren't the only humans scouring the ruins of Mordheim. The Order of the Templars of Sigmar has been drawn to the city as these nutters view the cataclysm as evidence of corruption that must be purged. If you like the idea of a bunch of torch-wielding fanatics, these babies are for you! This warband combines some tough characters who hate spellcasters, a Warrior Priest who can fight and use the Prayers of Sigmar (powers similar to the Prayers of Taal, but more militant in nature) to help out his warband, crazed Flagellants, cheap Zealots, and even cheaper (and faster!) Warhounds.

This warband is more specialised for close combat than Human Mercenaries. While you can take some missile weapons, they aren't as widely accessible, and the selection isn't great (few of the cooler gunpowder weapons are available). On the plus side you get cheap fast Warhounds for tying up the enemy and keeping THEM from shooting, Flagellants that will NEVER run, cheap Zealots to provide numbers, and decent characters.



upkeep tends to keep you from expanding your roster. I like to add an Ogre if I roll a Special Encounter that lets me take him for free. On those (relatively rare) occasions, I can even use him as a 'meat shield', standing in front of my other warriors, soaking up missile hits with his 3 Wounds and Toughness 4, while I use the rest of my warband to pick the enemy apart.

The Imperial Assassin appears in the 2002 Mordheim Annual. While he's as human as the Pit Fighter and Freelancer, he has some special skills that make him worth considering. First of all, while he has his own, he can be given any weapon that doesn't use noisy gunpowder. This is important, because normally you cannot alter a Hired Sword's equipment. It is also important because it plays well into the Assassin's other special ability: Poisoner. While poison can be purchased as equipment for your warband, it's not cheap (and it cannot be given to a Hired Sword). This guy gets it for free. An Assassin with a double-handed sword and Dark Venom becomes stronger than a

Troll in close combat! Assassins can also choose from a couple of nice skills as they gain Experience, which allows them to strike from the shadows and hit the enemy when his back is turned.

The Tilean Marksman (also from the 2002 Annual) is the final Hired Sword on our list. If you need to add some good solid missile fire to your warband, this guy might just be the thing for you. He's armed with a crossbow, has a good Ballistic Skill, and has two skills that allow him to ignore negative penalties for range and cover. Not bad for a measly human.

### Tips and Tricks

Okay, so now we know who's involved, and we've read the rules, how do we beat everyone else who's been doing the same thing? Well, there are a few things you can do to improve your chances of making your fortune and striking fear into the hearts of your enemies.



### Sisters of Sigmar

The next group of humans we should look at is the Sisters of Sigmar. These ladies were in the city when the cataclysm struck, and while most others have left, these 'fighting nuns' have decided to make their stand here. Obviously this warband is all female, so if that concept appeals to you, you'll probably enjoy playing them. As with the Witch Hunters, these ladies worship Sigmar, though that doesn't mean the two groups get along! Also as with the Witch Hunters, the Sisters are more combat-oriented than Human Mercenaries. In fact, the members of this warband have only one missile weapon available to them – the sling. While shorter-ranged than most missile weapons, slings DO have the advantage that they can be fired twice in a turn. Double the firing rate does have its advantages!

Slings aren't the Sisters' only advantage. Steel whips are a specialty of this warband, and are one of the nicer close combat weapons as they allow a warrior to attack an enemy model in close combat before she closes (risk-free attacks!). While they do not enjoy the henchman selection that most warbands get, their choices are a decent basic trooper (Sigmarite Sister) and a second, cheaper trooper to provide numbers. However, it's in the Heroes category that this warband really shines, particularly the Matriarch and the Augur. The Matriarch is the leader of the warband in both martial and spiritual matters, this gives her access to the Prayers of Sigmar, just like the Warrior Priest above. The Augur, however, is quite unique. While physically blind, an Augur has the ability to see the world around her through Second Sight, gaining re-rolls when rolling Characteristic tests or attempting to hit. If your mission requires a Characteristic test be passed to succeed, the Augur is the lady for the job.





### Dwarf Treasure Hunters

Dwarfs are traditionally very tough, and that is as true in Mordheim as anywhere else. Because of their hardy nature, Dwarfs can be very hard to keep down – they are only taken out of action on an injury roll of '6' (as opposed to the normal 5-6 for everyone else), and ignore the special rules of bludgeoning weapons. They gain extra treasure at the end of a game, as they are better at sussing out precious minerals than everyone else. They also Hate Orcs and Goblins, and they suffer no movement penalties for wearing armour.

To balance these advantages, they naturally have some disadvantages. For starters, they are one of the slowest races around. While a sprinting Dwarf can (barely) beat a zombie in the 100-metre dash, at normal walking pace they fall behind everyone. This can be a critical weakness in scenarios where the goal is to recover a certain item or gather up the most wyrdstone shards. They also have one fewer Hero available than most human warbands

when first recruiting. They have a maximum warband size of 12 warriors and their warriors are more expensive than humans. All this means Dwarfs can be outnumbered, outpaced, and outmanoeuvred by a cunning player.

Before you decide against them though, the warriors a Dwarf warband does have access to are worth the price. The warband is led by a Noble, who is tougher, more inspiring, and a better fighter than his human counterparts. The Engineer can help all the warband's missile weapons shoot farther. Finally, the warband can take two Troll Slayers, who are tough as nails and utterly unafraid of death.

Keep in mind that, at its most basic, your goal is to search the ruins of the formerly glorious city of Mordheim for this stuff called 'wyrdstone' – fragments of the comet that struck the city and devastated it. This is important, because it means that you don't always have to beat the enemy warband in combat to win the game.

### Equipment Advice

There is a wide variety of equipment available in Mordheim, and a new player may be uncertain about how to kit out his warriors. There are a few basic principles I try to follow when equipping my warband.

As a general rule of thumb, don't load down henchmen with lots of expensive equipment. A lucky shot can take a henchman out of action, and when you roll for injury for the luckless sod at the end of the game, you'll lose him 1/3 of the time. I try not to equip my henchmen with more GC worth of equipment than they initially cost (or thereabouts). Heroes are a better location for equipment – your incentive for keeping them intact is greater, and they are more likely to remain on your roster at the end of the game if they DO get taken out. A warrior who gets removed from your roster takes all his equipment with him; remember this.

### Shadow Warriors

Shadow Warriors represent the High Elf contingent in Mordheim, sent to investigate rumours of a growing Chaos threat. They specialise primarily in ranged combat, many having higher Ballistic Skill than average. They can also take Elf bows as starting equipment and have many new skills and spells to help them move around the shadows or strike down their enemies from a distance. While they aren't any tougher than humans, they are quicker and more highly skilled, which all helps in close combat. However, this is usually a last resort, and their Movement rate of 5 helps them avoid close contact with the 'lesser races'.







### The Undead

Okay, we've gone through the 'good guys', so it's time to go through the rogues (yes, I hear all you evildoers crying 'We're just misunderstood!'). The Undead in Mordheim represent warbands sent from Sylvania, a dark corner of the Empire where the dead do not rest. The Von Carsteins are the powerful vampire family who rule that land, and they have sent parties in search of wyrdstone to augment their powers.

The Undead are completely close combat-oriented and NONE of their henchmen get access to missile weapons at all. To balance this out, most of the warband causes Fear (which can halt an enemy warband in its tracks or stop them hitting your warriors when they get up close), they have some of the fastest models in the game (Dire Wolves have 9" Movement!), the Necromancer has some nifty spells, and the Vampire is quite frankly one of the toughest leaders available to any warband. As an added bonus, this is one of the few warbands that allows you to buy a replacement leader for your warband (after all, it's just a pile of bones without the vampire, right?).

Another preference I have is for multiple weapons over armour. Armour in Mordheim is a rare commodity, so to give your warriors a decent Armour save usually costs an arm and a leg. You can actually equip your Heroes with Toughened Leathers (2002 Annual, p.16) after their first game for a very reasonable 5 GC, but as it's a piece of equipment as opposed to proper armour, you cannot do the same for your henchmen (henchmen cannot carry Miscellaneous Equipment, only armour and weapons). On the other hand, equipping a warrior with two weapons is VERY easy to do in Mordheim. Two weapons doubles a warrior's chance of hitting when he attacks, and similarly increases the chance of getting an all-important Critical Hit. Critical Hits are the great equaliser in Mordheim, as even the best warrior can be taken down by a lucky shot. Keep in mind that everyone who uses weapons starts the game with a dagger, so you only have to add one more weapon for him to have two.

If you can equip your warriors with short bows or slings, do it. Short bows and slings are both dirt cheap compared to other missile weapons, the warrior using one can move and shoot, and the additional firepower as the warband moves forward can often turn the game to your advantage.

Don't be afraid to give equipment to your Heroes. As explained before, Heroes tend to be more reliable than henchmen, so there is less risk involved. And you really want your Heroes to stay in the battle for the entire game. At the

end of a campaign game, you get 1 Exploration die for each Hero in your warband who was involved in the battle and not taken Out of Action (and the winner receives a bonus die as well). These dice are added together to determine how many shards of wyrdstone your warband found, and what special locations you discovered (which often leads to more treasure!). More dice is definitely better, so keep your Heroes protected.

Aside from Toughened Leathers, some of the items that I generally like to include on my roster are the Lucky Charm, the Holy Relic, and Caltrops. Lucky Charms allow the bearer to ignore the first successful hit he takes, and are essential to protecting important characters. In fact they are so darned useful that many groups use house rules to limit them a bit (increase their cost or make them one-use only). If you have your character properly surrounded by henchmen, it can take a lot for the enemy to hit him at all, and it just adds to the frustration when you explain to your opponent that that hit did nothing (an evil man would find humour in this). The Holy Relic allows your warband to automatically pass the first Rout check they are forced to make in a game. This gives you at least one more turn to accomplish your goal before you have to take off. Caltrops (2002 Annual, p.86) are a one-use item that reduces an enemy charge by D6"; this is especially great for a character that specialises in ranged combat.





### The Possessed

When the comet struck, many hidden cults emerged from the shadows and into the ruins. The horror of the cataclysm and the warping effects of the wyrdstone that inundates Mordheim have combined to draw new members into the fold of many of these groups. These are the Possessed!

Possessed Warbands tend to specialise in close combat. While the Magister, Mutants, and Brethren can all carry missile weapons, that is not really their strength. Possessed (the Hero type for which the warband is named) are mortals who have given their bodies over to daemons, and they are quite hard in close combat. They cannot use equipment, but in exchange they get access to Mutations. Mutants can obviously take mutations as well. Darksouls are truly insane, and are afraid of no one. Beastmen are very tough and are one of the minority of creatures in the game who start with more than one Wound. As if this weren't enough, the leader of the warband (the Magister), has access to Chaos Rituals, which are magicks that tend toward the destructive.

### Other Hints

Protect your leader as most warbands can't replace him if he dies. If you only purchase one Lucky Charm in your warband, give it to him! Also, when running Human Mercenaries I will often give my leader (and no one else) a brace of pistols. The ranged combat is nice, but more importantly it gives him Strength 4 (which is a boost if he's not a Middenheimer). This may seem small, but it's important to give him a chance if the enemy does reach him.

Try to make your warband as large as you can afford. If you can, try to get your warband to a number that is just above a multiple of 4. So if you have 8 in your warband, try to figure out a way to save some gold somewhere and add a 9th. Why is this important? Simple: Rout checks are taken when a quarter of your warband has been taken Out of Action. With 8 warriors, you start taking Rout checks after two casualties. With 9 the number of casualties jumps to 3. That difference can be critical.

When playing in a campaign or league, buy as many Heroes as you can, right from the start. This not only gives you a

better chance at getting advances for them more quickly, it also maximises your Exploration dice from the first game of the league. Do not underestimate weaker Heroes like Youngbloods. These types of Heroes usually start with low amounts of Experience, which means they tend to advance quickly. I've had many a warband where a Youngblood eventually became more impressive than my Captain!

If you have missile weapons, take the high ground. Shooters who are elevated get to pick their targets, instead of having to fire at the closest enemy.

Also, always remember the goal. This is especially true of campaign or league play. Be prepared to take the fight to the enemy, but if you can win by avoiding the enemy warband and capturing the objective (be it wyrdstone shards, one or more buildings, or something else), then do that. Scenarios like Occupy, Hidden Treasure, Breakthrough, and the Lost Prince favour a fast warband if the player keeps his focus. Use this to your advantage.





## Skaven

The ratmen have much in common with Shadow Warriors (though don't tell the High Elves I said that) – they are on average no tougher or stronger than humans, but quite agile, and they have a high Movement rate. While they lack the Ballistic Skill and Leadership of Shadow Warriors, they make up for this in numbers... and the Rat Ogre. As with Ostlanders and Kislevites, Skaven get access to a 'big guy': Strength 5, Toughness 5, Movement of 6, 3 Wounds – a Rat Ogre is a killing machine. If you buy one though, keep a Hero nearby; a Rat Ogre without a Hero within 6" becomes subject to Stupidity, and that can be very bad for something with a Leadership of 4.

As impressive as that sounds, Skaven really work best as a combined-arms force. They have access to some unique equipment and skills that aid them both in close combat and in shooting. The ability to take large numbers of cheap Verminkin and Heroes armed with slings and other missile weapons, supported by a Rat Ogre and a mass of dirt cheap Giant Rats, allows the warband to overwhelm enemies with missiles and numbers. The Eshin Sorcerer's Magic of the Horned Rat tends to be short-ranged and deadly, which suits the Skaven tactics well.

Also keep in mind that if you ARE playing in a campaign or league, the after-the-game activities can be as important as the activities during the game. Sometimes it's better to cut your losses and run when you have enough warriors Out of Action to Voluntarily Rout. This is especially true if you've been careful and not lost any Heroes. If you know you've lost, let your opponent take the victory. I've seen many games where the losing warband was better off than the winning warband after the post-game activities had been sorted out! At that point it all comes down to who does better on the Serious Injury and Exploration rolls, and whose warriors have racked up the most advances. This is actually one of the things I like most about league play – losing a game is not always a bad thing, and there is always something to look forward to after the game ends. In fact, watching your warband advance can often be as satisfying as fighting the actual battles.

The last piece of advice I can give you is this – when you set out to build a warband, pick one that you LIKE THE FLAVOUR OF. I cannot stress this enough. If you don't like the way the warband plays, you will not have fun playing it in the game. Some people were meant to play Dwarfs, and others meant to play Elves. Figure out which warband suits

your personality best, and play that one. Too many players are fixated on playing the 'best warband/army' in a game. The secret to success in Mordheim is to learn the strengths and weaknesses of your warband, to play to your strengths and try to exploit the opposing warband's weaknesses. Remember that every player loses sometimes; it's important to choose a warband that you'll enjoy playing even when you do.

Hopefully a little of this has been useful to you. It's meant to be a starting point... the best way to really learn the game is to get a few of your mates together, collect some warbands, and play the game!

### Author

Mark was one of the original Mordheim playtesters and has written for White Dwarf and Town Crier. Mark is also on the Mordheim Rules Review.

### Further Information

Mordheim and warband boxed sets are available to buy Games Workshop Direct (see the How to Order section on page 94). The new mounted character are also released this month, see the News pages for more information.

### Website

[www.Mordheim.com](http://www.Mordheim.com)

