

# Dead Man's Hand

## Chronicle Part one

What is Dead Man's Hand?

### **WHAT IS DMH?**

Dead Man's Hand is an Old West skirmish game now out by Great Escape Games.

### **HOW MANY MODELS DO I NEED?**

Seven models is the most typical number, though some gangs may have more. You get to spend 21 points (Reputation) on your gang and each figure has a class – boss, gunhand, dude or amateur – and a corresponding Reputation value.

### **WHAT IS THE INSPIRATION?**

Westerns. We love movies from the multitude of spaghetti westerns through to the modern, Hollywood films and remakes. The gunfights in DMH echo the silver screen rather than what might have been the reality in the Old West.

### **IS IT ICOWGO?**

The initiative system is driven by cards and each model is assigned a card which determines the order in the turn in which it will act. Models are also allowed to interrupt an opposing model's actions, though this uses up its go for the turn.

### **WHAT DICE DO WE USE?**

Players will each need a single d20 and a single d10. d20's are used to resolve shooting and d10's are used to test your nerve.

### **ARE THE RULES SIMPLE?**

The rules are very easy to get to grips with but it takes experience to master all the possibilities in the hectic to-and-fro, close-up shooting that takes place in DMH.

### **HOW LONG DOES A GAME TAKE?**

The scenarios in DMH are set out as storylines. Each storyline has 3 scenes. The first scene is a mini-game, an icebreaker if you like, and takes just a few minutes to play. It may present an attempt to rescue a condemned man, or a simple duel at high noon.

The second scene adds more models but limits the victory conditions, for example, the scene ends when two men from one side are out of action. These usually take 30-45 minutes. The final scene is the big gunfight at the end of the movie. Everything's in play and games take around an hour. The set-up for each of the scenes is pretty much the same for each scene in a storyline, so there is no need to set the terrain up again after each scene.

### **WHAT MAKES THIS GAME DIFFERENT?**

Players have that absolute control over what their models do but the way that the card initiative system governs how a turn will play out (over which the player has only some control) means that a game of DMH is full of quick action, snap decision making, random chaos and tension. Suspense builds from the start of a turn to the end as the scene unfolds before you. Bullets are deadly, but not overly so, and the feared specialist gunhands, though murderous when at close range, die like any man.



## Cards

### WHAT CARDS DO YOU USE?

Dead Man's Hand comes with a deck of cards for use in the game. This is a standard set of solitaire-sized playing cards (plus jokers) with the addition of titles and special rules for each one.

### WHAT DO THE CARDS DO?

The cards work in two ways. First, they are used as special cards to affect the game (referred to as your "hand") while it's being played. Second, they are used to determine initiative. Just keep in mind that the two are separate.

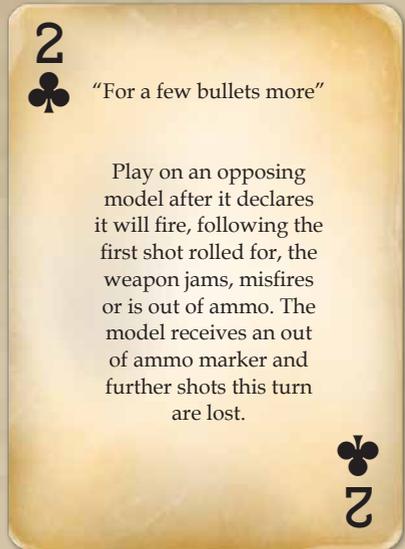
### THE "HAND"

At the start of each game each player deals themselves a hand. These cards can be played during the action. They might enhance what your own guys are doing, affect the other guy and influence the game in a number of ways. Played cards may be "trumped" by the opponent playing the same value card from his own hand. You can play any number of cards in a turn, but at the end of a turn you may only draw a single fresh card for your hand.

### INITIATIVE

At the start of each turn the players flip over the top card of their remaining deck. The important thing on initiative cards is the value, so this first card is given to a model of your choice. The rest of each players' models are dealt a card face down. Then all cards are revealed and this determines the initiative order in which the models act in the turn.

One useful aspect is that the player with the lowest initiative card on the table is allowed to switch one of his model's initiative card with another. Some of the special cards can affect the initiative of your models or the other guys.



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## Actions

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### WHAT ACTIONS MAY MODELS TAKE?

There are five actions:

- **Move**
- **Aim**
- **Shoot**
- **Reload**
- **Recover**

These may be taken in any combination and order. For example, a model may declare it is going to move, shoot, then move again. Or it might move, aim, then shoot. Or (as can often be the case), it might just want to shoot three times and get the job well and truly done!

### MOVE

Each move action allows the model to move up to 10cm (4"). Move actions may also be used to climb, mount/dismount a horse or move into hand-to-hand fighting. On the latter, models may not move to within 2cm of an opposing model. If it wishes to get into hand-to-hand, a further move action must be declared. It's quite a rare instance that hand-to-hand fighting will be more attractive than using the hand cannon!

### AIM

Aiming is straightforward, adding a bonus to the following shooting attack. Rifles are the only weapon that may benefit from declaring two aim actions.

### SHOOT

Unsurprisingly, this is the most common action that is undertaken. Each shoot action declared allows a single shot. Pistols are allowed up to three shots in a turn, repeaters/shotguns are allowed 2, and rifles (and shotguns with both barrels) one. The procedure for shooting is discussed in detail in next week's DMH Chronicle.

### RELOAD

There is no need for any recored keeping, but sometimes models find that there weapon is jammed or out of ammo. A reload action sorts that all out and lets you get back to the job of killin'!

### RECOVER

Models get shot, suffer near misses and lose their nerve, and this is represented by "under fire" markers. Once a model has enough of these, he's out of the game. Each recover action removes a single marker. This doesn't mean that a model makes a remarkable recovery from gunshot wounds; it may represent recovery fom a flesh wound, recovery of your courage after a near death experience or just getting yourself up out of the dirt and brushing yourself off.



### **WHY NOT JUST KEEP SHOOTIN'?**

The use of other actions is vital to keeping you alive. The way that shooting works in DMH is linked to a/ what your model is doing and, b/ what the target is doing. A moving target is harder to hit, and a shooter with a couple of “under fire” markers on him is at a serious disadvantage. Aiming at the right time, or closing to point blank range, adds to the chances that you’ll take a model right out of action rather than just inflicted an “under fire” marker.

It’s a balance of timing, choosing the right actions, teamwork and, of course, luck which makes for the meanest and most deadly gunfighters in Dead Man’s Hand.



You can find the dead man’s hand rule book and associated goodies at the webshop:

[Git it here, cowboy!](#)