

Mistsmall: Mistfall in Your Pocket

Rules & Quest Guide

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1. What is Mistsmall?

Feel free to skip this section if you want to get right to the rules.

Short answer: It's Mistfall in 18 cards and a few tokens. If you are interested in the longer answer, I wanted to share a few things that might be helpful if you are trying to decide if Mistsmall is worth the effort to build and learn to play.

Mistfall, the big game Mistsmall is based on, is an amazing game. Possibly my favorite game. But it has two major drawbacks, for me at least. First, it has an extremely high rules overhead and thus a daunting barrier to entry. Second, it's a table hog and it is virtually impossible to save your game progress if you want to play over multiple sessions, but need to pack up the game in between sessions.

Mistsmall helps with one of those things.

I wanted to design a version of Mistfall that I could play over my lunch breaks, or on a coffee table in front of the TV after the kids are in bed. That part I think it accomplishes. Mistsmall travels well. If I want, I can save my game. I'm able to take a photo of the game state, pack up the game, and later I can set it up and pick up where I left off in just a couple of minutes.

But Mistsmall doesn't help with the rules overhead. In fact, it adds a few rules that are tricky to wrap your head around at first. But this is what I wanted out of the game. I wanted the crunchy, brain-burning experience of Mistfall over my lunch break. If you leave setup and tear down out of the equation, Mistsmall plays in about the same time as Mistfall, but the difference again is you can easily play over multiple sessions, and can throw it in your backpack or even your pocket.

So I think Mistsmall is worth your time to build if you:

- Already own or know how to play Mistfall and want a more portable version.
- Are trying to decide whether or not to invest in Mistfall.
- Are a crazy person and are excited about the idea of putting in the work to learn the game.

Mistsmall might not be right for you if:

- You are looking for a lighter, less rules-heavy version of Mistfall. Mistsmall I think will take just as much of a time investment to learn to play.

All that said—if you have looked into Mistfall and think you'd like the game, I'd strongly encourage you consider it. I think it's worth the effort to learn it!

2. Rules

How to Learn Mistsmall

This rules explanation assumes you already know how to play Mistfall. I know, lame. Actually, Mistsmall is based on the ruleset from Mistfall: Heart of the Mists, the standalone expansion of Mistfall, which made significant improvements to the rules.

I apologize in advance that my rules here are not comprehensive in that sense. They will only tell you the differences between how you play Mistsmall vs. Mistfall: Heart of the Mists. It would take me months to put together a comprehensive rulebook that can teach you how to play from scratch. Eventually I might do that, but for now, my recommended process for learning Mistsmall is:

1. Download the PDF of the Mistfall: Heart of the Mists rulebook from online and read it a couple times.
2. Watch the playthrough video series of Mistfall: Heart of the Mists from Gray Board Gamer on YouTube. He goes through it slowly, which is excellent when just learning.
3. Download the fan-made flowchart from boardgamegeek: <https://boardgamegeek.com/filepage/156686/mistfall-heart-mists-flowchart>. This document made the game click for me.
4. Read through this ruleset to learn the differences for playing Mistsmall.

Summary of Main Mechanical Differences from Mistfall

- Hero cards are double halved and double sided.
 - Each card has two sides
 - Side A is the basic version (basic feats and gear)
 - Side B is the advanced version (advanced feats and reward gear)
 - Each side has two halves
 - A *Starting* half
 - A *Discarded* half
- Discarding, Burying, Taking Damage, and Restoring work differently.
- Enemy cards have multiple enemies on them.
- A new “reserve tank” of character health called Vitality.

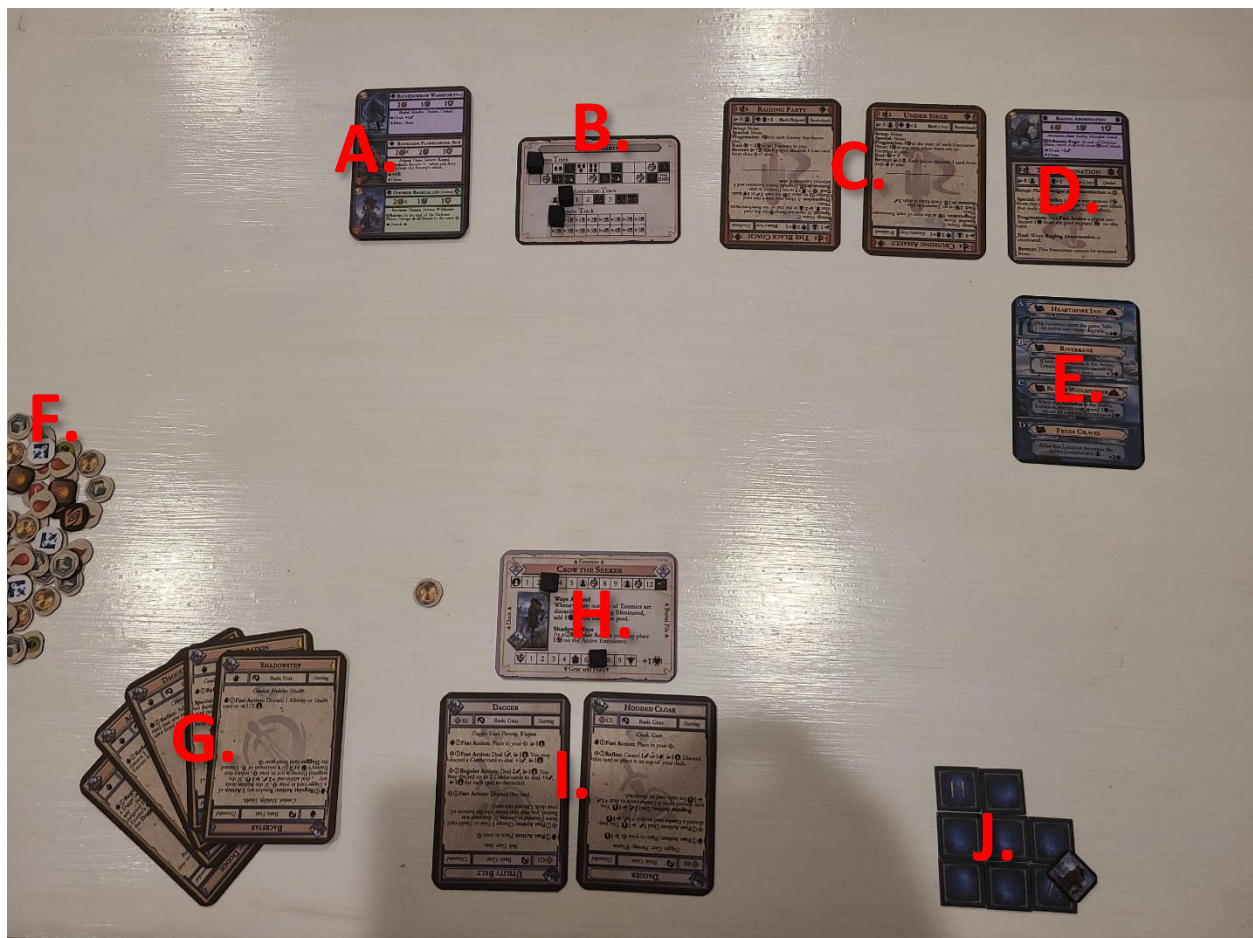
Setup

1. Set out the hero charter. Choose normal or nightmare side. Place cubes on the starting positions of your enemy focus track and your Vitality track. The default starting position on the vitality track is the black square with white text, but to make it more difficult you can start with less Vitality and start with your cube on the nightmare symbol. You can also make the game easier and start with more Vitality, placing the cube on the shield symbol at game setup.
2. Set up your hero cards (feats and gear). Start with the two gear cards in your hero area, below your hero charter. Start with the Basic side of the cards face up, and the *Starting* halves of the cards oriented on top. Do the same with your 5 feat cards. These start in your hand. Start with the Basic side of the cards face up and the *Starting* half oriented on top.
3. Set out the quest charter. Choose normal or nightmare side. Place cubes on the starting positions for the Time, Reinforcement and Darkness tracks. Stack 4 objective tokens on the quest charter for the Darkness track (see the Heart of the Mists rulebook if you aren't familiar with this).

4. Set up the 2 encounter cards. There are 8 total encounters, one on each side and each half of each of the two cards. Shuffle these (flip, rotate, shuffle) and set them out side by side, above the Quest area.
5. Put the special enemy / special encounter card next to the two encounter cards.
6. Place the locations card in the quest area, below the encounters.
7. Shuffle (flip and shuffle) the 5 enemy cards and set them in a stack above the Quest area. This is the enemy deck.
8. Set up the location tokens as described in the Quest Guide.
9. Give yourself 1 Resolve token.

Note that you don't start with a hero card deck. All your cards start in your hero area or your hand. As you play your hero turn, though, you'll start forming your deck. This will make more sense later.

Completed Setup



- A. Enemy deck.
- B. Quest Charter.
- C. Encounter cards.
- D. Special Enemy / Special Encounter card.
- E. Locations card.
- F. Tokens supply.
- G. Your hand of 5 basic feats, *Starting* half on top.
- H. Hero Charter.
- I. Your 2 basic gear cards, *Starting* half on top.
- J. Location tokens. Locations A and H revealed.

How to Play

There are no quest tokens in Mistsmall. Other than that difference, there are just some mechanical changes. The game flow is virtually identical to Mistfall: Heart of the Mists. When I play Mistsmall, I still reference the flowchart that I linked to in the What is Mistsmall section above.

The rest of this rules section will just talk through the changes from the Heart of the Mists ruleset that you need to adjust to for Mistsmall.

Basic vs. Advanced/Reward Hero Cards

The hero cards (feats and gear) have two sides, and there are two halves on each side. You start the game with the 2 basic gear cards in your hero area, and the 5 basic feats in your hand.

Until they are upgraded to advanced feats or reward gear, hero cards always stay face up, with the basic side facing up. When you buy advanced feats or receive reward gear, you are simply flipping one of these cards to have the advanced side facing up instead. Once you buy an advanced feat or earn a reward gear, that card stays with the advanced side facing up for the rest of the game.

Encounter rewards

When you complete an encounter, you have two choices when it comes to collecting your rewards.

1. Permanently flip one of your basic gear cards to the reward gear side
2. Don't flip any gear cards and choose to take 2 resolve instead.

Buying Advanced Feats

Just pay the resolve cost and permanently flip one of your basic feats to the advanced feat side. When you upgrade feats, keep the card oriented with the same half on top as it had been. In other words, if a basic feat is *Starting* when you upgrade it (flip it) to the advanced feat side, this advanced feat is also *Starting*. If the basic feat was *Discarded*, the advanced feat must also start out as *Discarded*. More on this later.

The resolve cost noted on the advanced feats pays for both halves of the card, obviously. Note that the costs have been raised since you are getting a 2-for-1 deal 😊.

Discarding, Burying, Restoring, and Taking Damage (The Tricky Part)

This is the single most difficult thing to wrap your head around with Mistsmall. If you can get this, the rest of it is pretty intuitive.

In Mistsmall, you are obviously limited on hero cards compared to the big game. You have 2 gear cards and 5 feat cards. You don't even start out with a hero card deck at the beginning of the game. Your hero cards, though, are double halved to help you have more options and more "cards" to work with.

All your hero cards have a *Starting* half and a *Discarded* half. Whichever half is oriented on top is the active half. You can only use actions from the active half of the card. When you start the game, all your hero cards begin with the *Starting* half as the active half.

Here's the tricky part. **There is no discard pile in Mistsmall.** Yep. Wild. You'll be doing things to discard cards, but it won't be placing cards in a discard pile. That's why the *Discarded* half of the hero cards exists.

When you discard a card that has the *Starting* half active, you rotate the card to the *Discarded* half and place it at the bottom of your deck. **Remember, it stays face up.** Note that if this is your first turn of the game, you don't have any cards in your deck yet, so the first card you discard will actually be starting your deck.

So to reiterate, when you play a feat from your hand, in big Mistfall you would just place that feat in the discard pile after you resolve the action. In Mistsmall there is no discard pile. Instead, after resolving the action of that feat, you rotate it 180 degrees so the *Discarded* half is on top (active) and place it at the bottom of your deck.

Not too bad so far, right? Now let's bend your brain: You can play *Discarded* cards. They are available to be used.

Let's illustrate how this works. Let's say on your first Hero turn you play 3 feats from your hand. As you resolved those actions, you rotated them from *Starting* to *Discarded* and placed them at the bottom of your deck. Then after your hero turn was over, you drew those 3 cards from your recently-formed deck to replenish your hand to 5 cards (yes, this empties your deck again). You move on to the defense phase and enemies attack. One of the *Discarded* feats in your hand cancels 2 physical damage, so you go ahead and play that card to cancel some damage. Just because a card is *Discarded* does not mean it's not available to be used.

Now the question comes: What do you do when you must discard a *Discarded* card? Well, I told you this was tricky. When you discard a *Discarded* card, you rotate it back to *Starting* and place it in your Buried pile. I know that sounds confusing at first, but I promise it works mechanically.

To the right is the basic side of one of your feat cards.

A. Feat type (basic or advanced). The advanced version of the cards are on the back.

B. *Starting* or *Discarded* card state. Hero cards begin the game on *Starting*, and can be Restored to *Starting* after being changed to *Discarded* and/or Buried.

So now that you have had the above introduction to the fundamental change to the mechanics in Mistsmall, I'm going to rip the band-aid off and give you a summary below of how all these mechanisms work.

When you discard

- A *Starting* card, rotate it to *Discarded* and place it at the bottom of your deck.
- A *Discarded* card, rotate it to *Starting* and place it in your Buried pile.

When you must take damage from an Enemy, you can choose between the following three actions (or a combination of these actions if you must take more than 1 damage).



- Place a card from your hand into your Buried pile. If the card was *Starting*, first rotate it to *Discarded*. If the card was *Discarded*, leave it on *Discarded* when you Bury it.
- Change 2 *Starting* cards from your hand or your deck to *Discarded*. Leave them where they were. For example, if you rotate 2 *Starting* cards from your hand to *Discarded* to take 1 damage, they stay in your hand; you don't move them to your deck or anything.
- Reduce Vitality (see section on Vitality below).

When a card effect instructs you to bury a card, you must rotate that card to *Discarded* (or leave it on *Discarded* if it already was) and place it in your Buried pile.

With 1 Restoration point, you can

- Move 1 card from your Buried pile to the bottom of your deck. Whether the card was on *Starting* or *Discarded* in the Buried pile, it remains as it was when you put it on the bottom of your deck. For example, if you use a restoration point on a *Discarded* card in your Buried pile, place it at the bottom of your deck, but keep the *Discarded* half active.
- Change 1 card from your hand, deck, or Buried pile from *Discarded* to *Starting*. Leave it in the same place, however. For example, if you use a restoration point to restore a *Discarded* card in your Buried pile to *Starting*, don't move it from your Buried pile to the bottom of your deck. Just rotate it and leave it where it is.

Enemies

When drawing enemies from the enemy deck to set up an encounter, take enemies from the top, leaving them face up. There is 1 enemy of each of the 3 colors on every side of every enemy card. You are only facing the enemy on that card that corresponds to the enemy color required for the encounter.

When an enemy leaves play, flip the card and place it at the bottom of the enemy deck.

If you ever need to draw for reinforcements and the enemy deck is empty, reduce your hero's Vitality by 1 for every enemy you were not able to put into play.

If an encounter requires enemies with a certain keyword, cycle through the deck looking for the correct enemy keyword. If the top card does not have the right enemy, flip it and cycle it to the bottom. Repeat this process until you have the enemies you need. If for some reason there are not enough enemies with the keyword you need, get as many out as you can, and just forget the keywords after that and fill in the rest by color.

Vitality

In Mistsmall, you have a lot fewer hero cards than in big Mistfall. So there needed to be a way for you to have some extra health. That's why you have Vitality.

In Mistsmall, Vitality is actually your loss condition. When it gets to zero, you die. Think of it as your reserve tank of health.

As mentioned above, when you take damage, you have 3 options. For each 1 damage you can:

- Bury a card (rotate it to discarded and put it in your Buried pile)
- Change 2 *Starting* cards from your hand or your deck to *Discarded*
- Reduce Vitality

Reducing Vitality means moving the cube to the left. You can reduce your Vitality by 1 to absorb 1 point of damage from an Enemy, saving you the penalty of discarding or burying cards to take the damage.

But the cost increases the more you do it in the same encounter. The first time in an encounter that you absorb damage by reducing Vitality, reducing Vitality by 1 absorbs 1 point of damage. **The second point of damage you absorb with Vitality in the same encounter costs 2 Vitality instead of 1.** The third point of damage you absorb with Vitality in the same encounter costs 3, and so on.

For example, say an enemy hits me for 2 damage. I don't want to bury or discard cards to take this damage. I want to use Vitality instead. So to absorb the first point of damage, I reduce my Vitality from 7 to 6. And to absorb the second point of damage, I reduce my Vitality from 6 to 4.

If you have no cards available to bury/discard to take damage, you must reduce Vitality to take the damage. If your Vitality ever gets to zero, you lose the game immediately.

The cost of absorbing damage with Vitality resets every encounter. You start back at 1 Vitality absorbing 1 point of damage with a new encounter, and the cost increases with each additional, as explained above.

To the right is your Hero charter.

A. Enemy focus track.

B. Vitality track.

C. Your hero's restoration value.

Locations

The locations card has 8 locations on it, labeled A through H. The print and play file includes location tokens that likewise have the letters A through H on them. Set up the Quest with the location tokens face down per the Quest instructions, and simply reference the corresponding location information on the Locations card.



Encounters

There are 8 total normal encounters on the two encounter cards. Each side of each card has 2 encounters. When you set up the game, randomly shuffle the order of the two encounter cards, and randomly rotate and flip them. Then place them side by side above the quest area.

When doing encounter setup, check the encounter type required by your current location (Wildlands, Borderlands, or Deadlands). Next, go through your encounter options in this order to find an encounter of the proper type:

1. Look at the top-half encounter of the left-most encounter card. If the encounter type is a match, move that encounter card down beside the locations card to show it is the active encounter. If it's not a match, move on.
2. Look at the top-half encounter of the right-most encounter card. If that's not a match, move on.
3. Look at the bottom-half encounter of the left-most encounter card. If it's not a match, move on.
4. Look at the bottom-half encounter of the right-most encounter card. If it's not a match, move on.
5. Flip both encounter cards, and repeat steps 1-4 as necessary.

When an encounter is completed or retreated from, flip and rotate the card and put it to the right of the other encounter card above the quest area.

When determining which encounter you'll be playing, you can skip over any encounters you have already played on this quest and play the next one that qualifies. You can replay encounters if you wish, though.

Special Encounter / Special Enemy

The special encounter and the special enemy are on the same card. Just treat it like it's the Special Enemy card, moving it through the quest and hero areas as required. You can still put objective tokens on the encounter portion of the card.

3. Quest Guide

Quest: The Abomination

A group of scouts has recently returned to Frostvalley Keep bearing ill tidings: one of the reinforced villages in the further north has been completely wiped out by an attack likes of which they had not seen in a long time. The only survivor of the massacre was driven to the edge of madness, but from his words you managed to piece together an almost coherent story. The village was attacked by undead led by an abominable creature of the Mists, who the survivor referred to as Maelgar: a mad warrior who was reputedly killed in an ambush some time ago. The Frostvalley Keep Loremasters were able to shed more light on the story: apparently, Maelgar was transformed after being taken by the Mists. However, as he used to be a brigand leader, there are still his treasure hoards left, and some of them might hold vital information or artefacts that can be used against the beast. The scouts said that they managed to track Maelgar to a desecrated temple, where the Mists are sending more undead to follow him into other raging battles. You have to leave immediately to end the forsaken beast's existence once and for all.

Location Setup

Set aside location tokens A and H, which remain face up. Shuffle the remaining tokens, which remain face down. Arrange the tokens in a 3x3 grid, but leaving the top-right space empty, without a token. Location token A goes in the bottom-right corner and location token H goes in the top-left corner. Location H is the final location.

Special Enemy Life



Quest Victory

This Quest ends in Hero victory, when **The Abomination** Encounter is successfully ended. No special rules apply.