

Some personal words on how to play

# DOOM PILGRIM

from the author of the game



I tried hard to make the game as compact as possible, so the rules are printed on the box only. But this way we lack things like game examples, setup drawings, or additional explanations that would explain things to players who don't resonate with how the rules are put. That's why I put together this paper in addition, in which we will look more in-depth into the game mechanics plus there will be some useful tips here.



DOOM PILGRIM mechanics came (if we look away from the cards-choosing part which was my own idea) from gamebooks. If you adopt this view, it may clarify a lot of things, the main thing being that we just follow the text, and it tells us what to do. Each card is like a paragraph in such a gamebook. We leave the page (i.e. put the card aside) after we read it, and after we applied the changes in our character sheet.

But the other important ingredient of the DOOM PILGRIM mechanics is the fact that I never liked dice rolling while playing gamebooks (well, dice rolling as such is okay, but why so much summing up, comparing numbers, rewriting HPs...?), and also wanted to keep it as compact as possible in terms of the number of game parts needed, so I adopted the approach of so-called idle games that things happen on their own just on the basis of their initial state. So, in DOOM PILGRIM we just read about fights we are coming through while our initial conditions (like having this or that item, this or that strength or weakness) determine the outcome, and we do not need dice, complex tables, and stuff. In most cases (if the card does not state otherwise) we win the fight after just writing down the wounds taken (if there are any). This thing seemed quite simple to me. But feedback from some players revealed they thought they just got beaten up when they got some wounds and so they for example did not take a trophy or loot from the defeated enemy.

And thus I realized another root from which my own approach originated, but which some people do not share, so misunderstanding may occur even though things seem perfectly simple to me. And this root is playing suicidal MtG decks in the past (where you always almost die even if you prevail, like "Hatred" or "Necropotence" decks) and loving very hard games in general. So, for me, being severely hurt in combat is a common thing and I would not conclude that I lost a fight just from severe wounds on my side. Therefore, an important thing for the gameplay: Damages (even the hard ones like losing a limb) usually mean just the price you had to pay for WINNING the fight (naturally, if you CAN still take this amount of wounds or limb losses) and you really WON THE FIGHT if the text does not state otherwise (especially



in more complex quests, like crawling through a dark castle, the result may be that you just got beaten up and must leave without any loot if you do not meet the right conditions; but the text always tells you).



Another misleading thing may be what *psychic drops* stand for in this game. ("Drop" is here in the meaning of fall, decrease, decline, etc.) And if you ask me why I just did not state the various types of *psychic drops* on the box, the answer is that the lack of space was not a problem this time. There will be many expansions for DOOM PILGRIM, and they may bring new types of *psychic drops*, so listing them now as any set list would be inappropriate.

So, let's say that a *psychic drop* in this game is anything you gain in the form of +X, apart from *WOUNDS* and *gold* (yes, you *gain* it, as it is in the form of +X, but remember that *gaining* a drop is a kind of *loss* in the end, similarly as when you gain damages or penalties). This applies, of course, only if it is not clear from the text that the thing is otherwise - for the base game, this applies fully, as there really are no other things with +X mechanics than *psychic drops*, *WOUNDS*, and *gold*, but, again, expansions may bring some new +X mechanics apart from *psychic drops*.

And I really think in cases like *depression*, *confusion*, *fear*, and so on, it was quite clear without further explanation that they are *psychic drops*. The only really misleading thing may be *fatigue*. It may seem as not a "psychic" drop as it relates to the body. Well, by the "psychic drop" term I just meant anything that is not straightly physical like losing a limb or getting a deep cut, so the overall fatigue seemed to belong in this area naturally (and we really mean OVERALL fatigue, not just body tiredness). So, please mind that *fatigue* is a *psychic drop* type for this game, even though you may have a different view on the topic of fatigue being psychic or not in the real life (in the end, some can tell that even depression is a thing of the body as well as soul).



One thing concerning *psychic drops* seems to be clear enough, but it is so important that I want to mention it again: You need 3 drops of the SAME TYPE to be doomed (and lose the game). So, when you have for example 1 *depression*, 2 *fear*, 2 *fatigue*, 1 *confusion*, and 2 *dismay*, you still are not doomed even though they are 6 in total, because we do not sum interspecies total in case of *psychic drops*.

A different situation is in the area of *CURSES* and *DISEASES*. Here we do interspecies summing up: when you have 3 *CURSES* of ANY TYPE IN TOTAL (like *CURSE of the werewolf*, *CURSE of the werehawk*, and *CURSE of the*



*wampyre* at the same time), you are doomed, similarly as when you have 3 *DISEASES* of any type in total (*pox* alongside with *pestilence* and *rabies* for example).



There emerged also a small confusion about what items you possess at the start of the game. And I admit there is a bit of a schizophrenic situation here. This schizophrenia is interwoven throughout the whole game, and it is a tax for the complexity of the story part. On the story level, you always have plenty of things, so you can procure things of common need, like some clothes, bread in your knapsack, a knife to cut the bread, and even some money for common things. This way you also have plenty of things needed for adventuring - like an ordinary weapon, maybe even some rope, lockpick, and who knows what... This is on the story part. But - and here comes the schizophrenia - in the GAMEPLAY part of things, *you have only things you found during the gameplay*, i.e. things that are mostly (I hope always, not only mostly, but not sure as a mistake or a special case can occur) in *italics* as keywords that you should write to your character sheet. So, you can buy *things* only for *gold* you gained and written down into your sheet, and only the *weapons* and *battle equipment* (like *a shield*, *a piece of armor*, and such stuff) you have written down can trigger a fight effect (like diminishing *WOUNDS* you get). This way, your character sheet is empty at the beginning of the game (at least the base game, as in the expansions things may be different - there will come various characters to be placed as your hero and some of them may have some initial equipment or money).

But as the narration is quite complex, you must use your wit from time to time, to understand what's happening concerning the items meant in the narrative. For example, if the text asks you if you have your ordinary weapon or if you have got a magic one during your journey, you must understand that you have AT LEAST the ordinary one if you have not found *a magic one*. Similarly, when you in one story give a knife to wild people so they could improve their living standards, you do not need to contradict this part of the text thinking you have no knife to give them. Also, when another text tells you that you bought a small house for a nice price (without telling you that you shall lose some gold from your inventory), you do not need to wonder if or when you got the money for it. DOOM PILGRIM is a game about fate over a wide period of time and you (as the hero) do and have many things that cannot be limited to the gameplay. Some cards even tell you a long story from your (your hero's) life, many things happen in the story part, but you make changes in your character sheet only when the text tells you (and it tells such things in *italics* and with the icon of writing pen). ✍





Maybe this issue deserves even a separate paragraph: In DOOM PILGRIM, you build your fate, not only a row of encounters (though yeah, at least in this base game, encounters and events familiar to classic RPG players form the biggest part of the stories), and that is also why you can sometimes see yourself on the picture. I mean, if there is a man on a horse attacking a dragon in the picture, it probably will be a depiction of you. Mostly, when there is a figure looking not towards, but from you on a card, **YOU ARE THIS FIGURE** (like a pilgrim standing in front of the castle on the DOOM PILGRIM box cover art). There are some exceptions to this standard, and you will understand when you find them. Overall, you can understand the pictures on the cards as some “prophetic flash images” of stories that will happen when you take this or that way, standing at a crossroads of your life.



But back to the gameplay more closely. My main advice: **READ TWICE** if you do not understand the meaning of the text and be especially careful about words like “can”, “have to”, “after”, “if” and so on. Such words are not usually in italics (like gains and losses) but they play an important role in the gameplay (with “if” and “otherwise” being the most important at all).

Sometimes you need to go through the whole text on the card to identify your condition and get your results, and sometimes you find your condition at the very beginning of the text - in this case you usually do not need to continue reading (and you will save some mystery and surprise for later if you do not do that), but do not run too rashly from the text - look at least broadly on the following text if there is not another paragraph by chance (usually graphically separated) that you could apply too. For example, there is a card that allows you to torture your enemies to get some valuable info after you defeated them - so if you stop reading right after you found you defeated them (as you naturally do not need to read the other paragraphs about them defeating you when this does not apply to your conditions), you would not get to the paragraph at the end of the text. Similarly, there can be also some loot you would lose if you dealt with the texts inattentively.



However, the main rule as I see it is: **PLAY THE GAME TO AMUSE YOU!** There are not going to be any tournaments in DOOM PILGRIM that would need strictly set rules, so all the rules are here only to make an amusing experience for you, and if you do not want to apply this or that rule, or to apply it differently, do as you wish! Similarly, if you are not sure about this or that effect of the card, apply it as you see it most logical (use your wit or taste). If you even bypass one thing by twisting the rules to your advantage, no worries, another danger awaits right behind



another corner to punish you. Really, **PLAY AS YOU WISH**. In the end, there already are alternative ways of playing in **DOOM PILGRIM** add-ons (see below where to get them) and there will come others in the future. The game came also from the inspiration by tarot cards, which you usually do not really “play” as such, but you more just like *dive* into their universe.



## A FEW HINTS FOR THE START

If you will play too defensively, avoiding all danger, you will also most probably get no loot and when the time comes to face some inevitable danger, you may find yourself defenseless.

Similarly, cards that do nothing (that have only a story text on them without telling you to make any change in your character sheet) are like aces as they bring you closer to the win (i.e. bottom of the deck) with no harm, but on the other hand, no harm, no gain, and without gains, some cards can kill you more easily.

Quite often, some cards will serve as such “aces” for you even though they have some gameplay text on them - in the case when there is no condition that applies to you (for example a town visited when you do not have gold to buy anything there). Remember that such cards may be useful for you later in the game, so you should maybe postpone such a card rather than play it now.

Of course, you will first need a bunch of gameplays to find which card is such a place, such an “ace”, and which does not.

So, watch your steps, adventurer!



## USEFUL LINKS

- \* For free, you can get valuable **ADD-ONS** (like for example printable character sheet) here: <https://war-claw-games.itch.io/doom-pilgrim-add-ons>
- \* Or a great official **SOUNDTRACK** here (please support its makers there, if you like it): <https://angemacplusshaungarea.bandcamp.com/album/doom-pilgrim>
- \* There is also an option to have both the soundtrack and the add-ons in one pack: <https://warclawgames.bandcamp.com/album/doom-pilgrim>

The content of the add-ons will be updated regularly on both portals.

And as mentioned, there will also be expansions! And many more in the world of **DOOM PILGRIM** is on the plan for the future.





Last, but not least, I would like to thank Bower's Game Corner YouTube channel, for he was the first reviewer of the game and he also brought most of the ideas that were incorporated into this paper:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3rtIXOG7kEY&t=1s&ab\\_channel=Bower%27sGameCorner](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3rtIXOG7kEY&t=1s&ab_channel=Bower%27sGameCorner)

Feel free to contact me with your own questions or comments:

\* Via Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/warclawgames>

\* Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/warclawgames/>

\* Or e-mail: [dronedartworks@gmail.com](mailto:dronedartworks@gmail.com)

\* You can also subscribe to War Claw Games channel here:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCkjQ3FrKd7dLewdoegcikyQ>



Thank you deeply for your interest in DOOM PILGRIM! And sorry for so many words here, but DOOM PILGRIM is going to be a long story (with all the expansions and stuff), so it may be useful to get into it in length in the beginning.

Waclaw Traier

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

