Memoir '44 Overlord:

A Beginner's Guide to Commanding Large Battles



General Howitzer Field Manual – Overlord Operations

GeneralHowitzer.com

1. What Is Overlord?

Historically, the term Overlord comes from Operation Overlord, the Allied codename for the invasion of German-occupied Western Europe during World War II. Launched on June 6, 1944, with the D-Day landings in Normandy, Operation Overlord was one of the largest amphibious military operations in history and marked the beginning of the Allied campaign to liberate Western Europe.

In Memoir 44, Overlord, as a gaming concept, takes its name from this historic operation, reflecting the larger battlefields, multiple commanders, and coordinated military operations that distinguish it from the standard game. It is a large-scale version of Memoir ’44 that allows multiple players to participate in the same battle. Instead of commanding a single battlefield, players coordinate across an expanded map divided into three sections: Left Flank, Center, and Right Flank.

Overlord introduces a command hierarchy, making communication, cooperation, and timing important elements of the game.

An Overlord battle typically accommodates up to eight players, with four commanders on each side.

2. The Command Structure



Each army may have four players with distinct responsibilities.

Commander-in-Chief (C-in-C)

The Commander-in-Chief directs the overall battle and manages the army's Command cards.

Responsibilities include:

- Establishing the army's overall strategy.
- Distributing Command cards to the Field Generals.
- Deciding which battlefield sections receive orders.
- Coordinating major attacks and defensive operations.
- Managing the army's limited command resources.

Field Generals

Three Field Generals command the Left, Center, and Right battlefield sections.

Each Field General is responsible for:

- Executing the Command cards received from the Commander-in-Chief.
- Selecting units to activate within their assigned section.
- Managing movement and combat.
- Responding to enemy attacks.
- Coordinating with the Commander-in-Chief within the communication restrictions.

Field Generals generally cannot choose their own Command cards. Their effectiveness depends on the orders provided.

3. The Three Battlefield Sections



Three battlefield sections: Left Flank, Center, and Right Flank

The expanded Overlord battlefield is divided into three command sectors.

Left Flank

The Left Field General manages the army's left-side operations. Typical responsibilities include protecting the flank, capturing objectives, and supporting the Center.

Center

The Center Field General often manages the most heavily contested portion of the battlefield. Maintaining reserves and supporting adjacent sectors can be particularly important.

Right Flank

The Right Field General manages operations on the opposite flank, including attacks, defensive positions, and maneuvering toward objectives.

Although each Field General commands a specific sector, the battle must be approached as a coordinated operation.

A successful attack on one flank may depend on actions occurring elsewhere.

4. Understanding Command Cards



Overlord uses special rules governing how Command cards are distributed and executed.

At the beginning of a turn, the Commander-in-Chief selects Command cards from the army's hand and assigns them to the appropriate Field Generals.

A Field General uses the assigned card to order units in their section.

Some Command cards affect multiple battlefield sections, and certain cards have special Overlord instructions.

> Important: The Commander-in-Chief cannot assume that every Field General will receive orders on every turn. This creates a central tactical challenge: deciding where limited orders will have the greatest effect.

5. Communication Between Commanders

One of the most distinctive features of Overlord is its communication system.

a. Under the standard Overlord command rules, Field Generals are restricted in what they may communicate to the Commander-in-Chief and other Field Generals.

The Commander-in-Chief must distribute orders without receiving tactical advice from subordinate commanders. Once cards are assigned, Field Generals make the tactical decisions necessary to execute their orders.

These restrictions simulate the difficulties of battlefield command and encourage players to anticipate their commanders' needs.

b. Under the open communication version of Overlord players are free to discuss with one another and the CIC their plans. This makes for a more relaxed atmosphere but removes the simulation of real-life communications and decision-making on the battlefield.

Players should agree on the applicable Overlord communication rules before beginning, particularly when using optional rules or tournament variations.

6. Essential Overlord Strategies

Maintain a Balanced Command

Avoid concentrating every available Command card on one section unless a decisive opportunity justifies it. A Field General who receives no orders may be unable to respond effectively to an enemy attack.

Coordinate Attacks

Attacking simultaneously across multiple sectors can prevent the enemy from concentrating its defenses. However, poorly coordinated attacks may expose units before supporting forces are ready.

Preserve Reserves

Do not commit every unit immediately. Reserves provide flexibility when unexpected threats emerge or a breakthrough becomes possible.

Understand Your Field Generals

A Commander-in-Chief should consider the battlefield conditions facing each subordinate commander. A section under heavy attack may require additional orders, even when another sector offers attractive offensive opportunities.

Manage Casualties

Overlord battles can involve many units, but medals remain the primary measure of victory. Avoid sacrificing valuable units merely to gain temporary ground unless the scenario objectives justify the risk.

Exploit Terrain

Terrain is especially important in large battles. Forests, hills, towns, rivers, and obstacles can create defensive positions that influence the entire battlefield.

7. Preparing for Your First Overlord Battle

Before beginning an Overlord game:

1. Choose an Overlord scenario. Select one specifically designed for the expanded battlefield. Overlord Campaigns and Scenarios are marked as such at GeneralHowitzer.com .

2. Prepare the battlefield. Assemble the required boards, terrain, units, and obstacles.

3. Assign commanders. Identify each army's Commander-in-Chief and Field Generals.

4. Review special rules. Confirm any scenario-specific terrain, units, objectives, and victory conditions.

5. Explain the command system. Ensure everyone understands how Command cards are distributed.

6. Review communication restrictions. Establish what players may discuss during the game.

7. Confirm victory conditions. All commanders should understand the medal requirements and any special objectives.

For a first game, appoint experienced Memoir ’44 players as Commanders-in-Chief and allow newer players to serve as Field Generals. This helps beginners concentrate on movement, combat, and tactical decisions without managing the entire army.

8. Common Beginner Mistakes

Ignoring one battlefield section. An inactive flank can become vulnerable if its Field General receives too few orders.

Failing to coordinate attacks. An isolated offensive may allow the enemy to concentrate fire against unsupported units.

Overcommitting to an objective. Capturing an objective is not always worthwhile if doing so results in excessive casualties.

Forgetting communication restrictions. Overlord is designed to challenge players' ability to coordinate under limited communication.

Treating Overlord like three separate games. Although the battlefield has three sections, every action contributes to one overall battle.

9. The Commander-in-Chief's Checklist

Before distributing Command cards, ask yourself:

- Which section faces the greatest immediate threat?
- Where can my army gain the most medals?
- Which Field General needs orders most urgently?
- Can two sections coordinate an attack?
- Am I leaving a flank dangerously exposed?
- Do I need to preserve cards for a future opportunity?
- Are my commanders positioned to exploit a breakthrough?

Good Overlord commanders continually balance immediate tactical needs against the overall battle plan.

10. Final Thoughts

Overlord transforms Memoir ’44 from a two-player tactical game into a cooperative command experience.

Victory depends not only on individual battlefield decisions but also on how effectively the Commander-in-Chief and Field Generals coordinate their efforts.

The best Overlord armies combine clear strategic direction, disciplined command, effective use of terrain, and timely execution of orders.

> General Howitzer's Tactical Advice: In Overlord, the strongest individual commander does not necessarily win the battle. The army that coordinates its commanders most effectively often has the advantage.

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