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 brings multiple players together on an expanded battlefield. On a standard two-board map, each board has left, center, and right sections: six in all. These form three command sectors - Left, Center, and Right - each led by one Field General. Each Field General commands a pair of adjacent underlying sections.

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 sectors.

Each Field General is responsible for:

- Executing the Command cards received from the Commander-in-Chief.
- Selecting units to order within their two assigned sections.
- 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. Battlefield Sectors and Sections

LEFT FIELD GENERAL		CENTER FIELD GENERAL		RIGHT FIELD GENERAL	
Section 1	Section 2	Section 3	Section 4	Section 5	Section 6

Each Field General commands the two sections in their sector. A Section card generally orders units in one section; if a general receives two Section cards, play one in each section.

Initiative: Acting Without a Command Card

When a Field General receives no Command card on a turn, they may choose to act on initiative. Roll one battle die and apply the result to a unit under that general's command. Rolling is optional.



INFANTRY
Order one infantry unit of your choice.



ARMOR
Order one armor unit of your choice.



STAR
Order one infantry, armor, or artillery unit of your choice.



FLAG
Choose one unit: it must retreat one hex and may not battle.



GRENADE
Choose one unit: remove one figure; that unit may not battle.

If an infantry or armor symbol is rolled and no matching unit is under that general's command, no unit is ordered and the roll has no effect. A unit ordered by initiative moves and battles under the normal rules, subject to its movement, terrain, and combat restrictions.

Example: The Left Field General receives no card and chooses to roll. A star allows that general to order one infantry, armor, or artillery unit in their sector. A grenade instead costs one figure.

4. Understanding Command Cards



How a Turn Works: An Example

1. The Commander-in-Chief gives a Left Probe to the Left Field General and a Center Attack to the Center Field General. Up to three cards may be played, but at least one must remain in hand.
2. Generals order their units. Complete all ordered movement across the entire battlefield before any attacks. Then resolve attacks across the battlefield, one Field General at a time. Each general completes all attacks with their eligible ordered units before the next general attacks.
3. Discard the played cards. The Commander-in-Chief normally draws two replacement cards, up to the scenario's hand limit. Some cards change the draw or have special rules.

See the official Overlord rules for special Command card instructions.

5. Communication Between Commanders

Under the standard Overlord rules, Field Generals may discuss tactics with one another at any time. The Commander-in-Chief may discuss the battle, tactics, and strategy in detail with only one Field General while delivering that general's orders. The Commander-in-Chief must not show or state which Command cards remain in hand.

Other Field Generals receive their cards without discussion with the Commander-in-Chief. To keep the game moving, deliver those cards first, then deliver and discuss orders with the chosen general. The receiving Field General carries out the card but need not follow the Commander-in-Chief's advice.

Players may agree to open communication as a house rule. Before play, confirm any variations or tournament rules. Consult the official Overlord rules for the full procedure.

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.

Players and equipment

Eight players (four per side) provide the full experience. With six, each Commander-in-Chief also commands the center. Two people can play one-on-one.

For a standard two-board battle, gather two boards; two Command card decks (or an Overlord deck); battle dice; and the units, terrain, obstacles, medals, and special components specified by the scenario. Check its briefing for setup, card hand size, and victory conditions.

Official Memoir ’44 Overlord rules: setup, initiative, and card details

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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