



Deathmatch Island One-Shot Mode

This is a guide for playing Deathmatch Island as a single one-off session. It uses modified procedures from the core game. Run with either Island One or Island Two, and any Cast.

Character creation

Follow character creation as normal, but Competitor Players may choose everything, including Occupation, instead of rolling randomly (for the sake of efficiency). If time is tight, you could have players create their characters ahead of time or provide them with pregenerated characters to choose from.

Cross off the top three boxes in the Injury tracker. Do not mark any Advances. Competitors in one-shots are more fragile to compensate for the shorter timeframe.

Trust Building and Flashbacks

Instead of doing Icebreakers, run Trust Building and flashbacks.

Taking turns, each Competitor Player asks one question to another from the Trust Building Questionnaire. That player answers with a short flashback to their life before they came to Deathmatch Island. The Production Player may insert one detail during the flashback.

When deciding how to respond to the question, a good place to start is your Initial Motivation. These flashbacks are where you start to give the table insight into what the motivation might be, and where it comes from.

Each Competitor Player marks 1 Trust with every other competitor on the team.

Phase One

Allow Phase One to run for 2–3 nodes, depending on how much time you have available (leave at least an hour for the End Game).

Phase Two

If you think you have time, run Phase Two as well. Otherwise, skip this step.

Trust Building and Flashbacks

Do another round of Trust Building and flashbacks (see previous). This time, both competitors mark Trust with each other after each question and answer.

Go Your Separate Ways

A klaxon sounds. Loudspeakers instruct the competitors to follow the instructions in their uniform pocket, which are directions to a hidden, individual waiting room for each competitor. A small windowless room, fluorescent light, red carpet, a leather arm chair, a glass of water. What's going through the head of each competitor? **Everyone marks one Advance.**

Standoff

Each competitor leaves their waiting room and starts making their way across the nearly empty island to reconvene with the other survivors. Run the Standoff procedure and the End Game as appropriate.

Standard End Game

If at least one player chooses Play to Win, run the Standard End Game as usual. Any surviving NPCs are usually taken out during the Scout stage (incorporate this into confessionals). If you have an odd number of players, have one NPC survive to even out the pairs during the Scramble (the Production Player rolls dice for them).

Epilogues

All players describe one thing that happens immediately after the game ends. The winner describes a short epilogue of their character's life one year after winning the game.

REDACTED End Game

If all players choose Break the Game, run the REDACTED End Game. Use the following dice pool for Production (it's a little toned down from the usual one).

Production (2d8 Dangerous, Exhausting). Merciless (d8). Armed kill-squads (d10). Subliminal programming triggers (d10). Guard dogs (d6).

Epilogues

Take turns describing a short epilogue for each player competitor one year after the events of the game (if your character died, perhaps take a look at the fate of friends or family).

Strange Incidents

You can sprinkle in strange incidents between contests to bring the "mysterious island" theme to the table.

- A terminal crackles to life. A soundstage and a host. The host wears a rubber mask, a crude caricature of one of the player competitors. In a distorted voice, they welcome the team to the island and tell them that they have a *particular* interest in seeing this team succeed.
- A competitor in the distance, running. A van pulls up, the competitor is shot, the van screeches away. Upon investigation, the competitor was carrying a jar containing a fluorescent red slug (Tier 2 REDACTED Acquisition).
- One of the competitors loses sight of the rest of the group for a few moments. An orange sphere appears. They have a flashback. *One of your family members competed in Deathmatch Island. Who was it? Did they come back?* When the flashback is over, the sphere is gone.
- Corpse that bears close resemblance to a competitor.
- A window that looks out on infinite black space.
- A strange, fluorescent red slug.
- An alien plant growing.
- Albino rabbits on the loose.
- Corpse of dead spy/agent.
- A military tracking device.
- A briefcase full of cash.
- The corpse of a VIP guest, knifed in the back.
- A United Nations satellite phone.
- A dossier on a political figure.
- A reward dilemma for a single competitor. Small Luxury (each) to share with whole team OR one rocket launcher and a special Advance to be used by YOU only.


CONTESTS

When an obstacle stands in the way of the competitors, a contest is triggered. Each node on the map that the competitors travel to will involve one contest, usually rolling against a different team of competitors. The contest resolves which side is successful, and they get the rewards on offer.

When a contest is called, the Competitor Players confer with each other, then the leader states their **approach** and **goal**.

The Production Player decides which of the five Capabilities will resolve the contest. Then they roll the **Traits** and any **Advantage** dice for the opponent. They **keep the single highest die and add the current Danger Level** to get a final result.

Each player dictates an announcement of their competitor's entrance into the contest. This could take the form of a written chyron or lower-third caption (as it would appear on screen over footage of their competitor), or it could be the bombastic voice-over of the Host. On your turn, announce your competitor's identity and grab dice as you go: If your **Occupation** applies to the contest, grab that die. Then add your **Name** die and the **Capability** die for the contest when you say your Name.

- You may mark **Fatigue** (○) to include the die from a second Capability in your dice pool.
- You may use an **Acquisition**—if you do, roll a number of d4 equal to the Tier of the Acquisition and remove the . Add the highest d4 result to your total.
- If you ask to spend **Trust** with another competitor, they give you a copy of their Name die (they still use their Name die for their own roll).
- If you have any Advantage dice, include it in your dice pool.



Once everyone has spoken their names, roll your competitor's dice pool and sum your **two highest**, not counting d4s. Then **add the highest number from the d4s** (if any) to your two highest dice to get your competitor's final result.

Compare your result to the Production Player's target number:

- Equal to or greater than: Your competitor succeeds.
- Less than: Your competitor fails. Mark 1 Fatigue. If you cannot mark Fatigue, you must mark an Injury.

The successful Competitor Player with the highest result is **best**, and marks a number of New Follower boxes equal to the target number. The other competitors that **succeed** each earn half that amount (round up). Each competitor that **fails** marks 1 New Follower box, and may take harm.

REWARDS AND ACQUISITIONS


Every map location has a list of rewards, most of which are Acquisitions. When you gain an Acquisition, you mark a diamond on the competitor sheet with a slash, like this: . There are three types of Acquisition—weapons, equipment, and .

Before dice are rolled in a contest, a competitor may erase a mark on an Acquisition to roll a bonus d4. Every Acquisition has a Tier, indicated by a number in a circle like this: ③ When you use one, roll a number of d4 equal to the Tier. So if your Acquisition has a ③ beside it, you roll 3d4.

The highest d4 result is added to your final tally for the contest (separate to the rest of your dice pool).

HARM

In any contest, **every time a competitor fails, you mark 1 Fatigue**. If you cannot mark Fatigue, you must mark an Injury or use Trust to have a teammate block the Injury for you.

- **DANGEROUS** contests mean you **mark 1 Injury when you fail** (instead of 1 Fatigue).
- If **any Competitor Player uses a Weapon Acquisition** in a contest, that contest *automatically becomes Dangerous* for them. Pulling out weapons makes everything riskier.
- Deathmatch contests are *always* Dangerous.
- **EXHAUSTING** contests cost 1 Fatigue to enter.
- **RESTRICTED** contests **forbid the use of any Acquisition except  Acquisitions**. Your official Deathmatch Island weapons and Acquisitions become remotely disabled.
- **RISKY** contests mean that for each PC who fails, the team receives one less Acquisition for any rewards in that node (if any). For example, if two Player Competitors fail, the Production Player subtracts two Acquisitions from the node rewards.

TRUST

When you spend Trust, ask for one for the following:

- **Bolster you:** Your companion describes how they assist your action in a contest and gives you a copy of their Name die.
- **Block harm for you:** They say how they defend you and the harm is avoided (they don't suffer it either).
- **Follow your lead:** Spend Trust with the leader of the team to sway them to your idea or plan.

SUPPORT

A competitor may choose to sit out of a contest to provide Support. They pass a copy of their Capability die to the Competitor Player of their choosing (who includes it in their dice pool). The supporting competitor gains 1 Trust with the character they support and marks 1 New Follower box.

FATIGUE AND INJURIES

When you suffer Fatigue and have no boxes left to mark, mark an Injury. When you mark , choose an **Advance**. When you mark your last Injury box, your competitor dies.

PHASE TWO

Phase Two is the climax of the island, a battle royale where many competitors will die and only a handful will progress to the next island. Phase Two is a series of linked contests, arranged in three stages:

1. **Scout.** Find and reconnect with your allies, spy on the enemy alliance, and survey potential battlegrounds for the big confrontation. The winner earns a 1d10 Advantage die, which they may use once during Phase Two.
2. **Scramble.** Competitors move to seize control of the chaos, as threats and betrayals are revealed. Each Competitor Player must choose to either **Defend** against a threat or **Seize** control. The winner of the Seize contest chooses a bonus Capability for the Battle Royale, and decides the fate of those present..
3. **Battle Royale.** The concluding contest. The Battle Royale is always a Deathmatch contest, and only a fraction of the remaining competitors can progress to the next island.

BETWEEN ISLANDS

While making the journey from one island to the next, the competitors rest and recover as best they can. Complete the six stages Between Islands:

1. **Debrief.** Make notes about the fates of all the competitors on that island.
2. **Theory Crafting.** Going in turns, each Competitor Player chooses a theory type, and describes a theory about what's really going on with Deathmatch Island and what they saw on the previous island that reinforces that theory. The four theories types are **Political Project**, **Entertainment**, **Big Experiment**, and **Weird**.
3. **Jury Votes.** Each competitor receives a jury vote from every player.
4. **Recuperate.** Clear **2 Fatigue** each. **Mark 1 use of Small Luxuries or Survival Gear to clear another 2 Fatigue.** Take turns describing how you rest and recuperate during the voyage.
5. **Trust Building.** Taking turns, each Competitor Player asks one question to another from the Trust Building Questionnaire. That player answers with a short **flashback** to their life before they came to Deathmatch Island. The Production Player may insert one detail during the flashback. When deciding how to respond to the question, a good place to start is your Initial Motivation. The Competitor Player who had the flashback notes the flashback down as an **Advantage** on their sheet. Your competitor can call on this memory during a contest for a bonus die. Then **both competitors mark Trust with each other.**