

Alexander's Guide to getting started in Dominions

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1 Introduction

Dominions is a rather complex game that offers potential players a multitude of choices.

Even for a veteran gamer like myself the initial confusion concerning what to do and what to expect can be overwhelming. I am writing this guide in the hopes of helping new players to get a foothold on some of the games basics.

2 Choose a Nation

The first thing you will have to do is pick a nation.

There is no 'correct' choice. The nations are all different from each other in a vast number of ways. I will NOT give you a complete rundown of every nation. I started writing just such an essay and it's a mind boggling task. Rather I suggest that you play whatever nation tickles your fancy. They are all good in their own way. Just take the one that sounds like it would be fun to you. Later on, after you have some experience with the game you will be better able to judge the differences between individual nations by yourself.

All the nations in Dominions follow classic historical or fantasy themes that are familiar to us all. Illwinter has created names for these themes, which can make initial choices confusing.

The following is a list of all the nations and a description of what that nation is really all about.

Abysia Lava/Demon humanoids. They play with fire.

Atlantis Undersea Fish humanoids. (NOT an island of advanced humans)

Pythium A fantasy representation of the Roman Empire

Man Briton during the times of King Arthur

Ulm Tolkien style Dwarves. (even though they call themselves men)

Ctis Lizard humanoids.

Arcoscephale A fantasy representation of ancient Greece

Caelum A nation of flying humanoids.

Ermor Nation of the undead

Marignon A fantasy representation of France (with magical inquisitors!)

Pangaea Nation composed of magical woodland creatures.

Vanheim Nation based on Norsemen/Vikings

Jotunheim Nation of giants and goblins based on Norse/Viking myths

R'lyeh Undersea nation lead by Mind Flayers. (Illwinter calls them illithids)

Pick whichever sounds like fun. Then it's time for your God.

3 Choose a God

This is usually the point where a new players head explodes.

What god will represent you? There are many choices and there are many subtleties between them. If this is giving you a headache then just take one that looks cool to you.

If you are looking to plan ahead then you may want to try one of the following archetypes. These are some of the popular and successful themes that I have used or seen used. This is not a definitive listing of the possibilities. Please feel free to deviate from these choices and do your own thing.

3.1 Physical Threat God

Take a big strong god and plan on pumping it up with spells and magic items. The humanoid gods tend to work better as they have 'slots' for all the magic items. A serious Physical Threat God can wreak havoc on the battlefield. This is a real 'all your eggs in one basket' sort of thing, but it can be potent.

Example: Take a Cyclops. Give him a lot of earth magic to increase his protection. Heap some defensive magic items on him. Give him boots of the Behemoth so he can trample. Then GO STOMPING!

3.2 Magical Threat God

Pick out a really good battle magic spell and take a god that will specialize in that magic. Have this god augment your main army as high power artillery.

Example: Take the male Titan. Give him a lot of air magic. Research the spell orb lightning. Send the Titan into battle with some screening troops. ZAP AWAY!

3.3 Rainbow Mage

Give your god two or three levels of every type of magic. Use this mage to search your new provinces. This will expose a multitude of special sites which will crank up your gem income. Now use your talented mage and the pile of gems to summon powerful creatures and forge potent magic items.

3.4 Bargain Bin God

Choose a god that has very little cost so you can save your points for dominion and dominion scales. You may have noticed that the gods cost points. Each nation has 500 to spend. Some players choose weak gods so they can use their points to pump up the scales which will empower their nation.

Example: The Oracle is a zero cost god that has good dominion. The Manticore is a zero cost god that can do some fighting.

3.5 Air Assault

Both the Moloch and Lord of the Night are flyers that can summon potent flying allies. These Gods can slowly summon up and lead a massive flying strike force. Don't underestimate the power of a strong surprise attack. It takes time and effort to develop, but it can be spectacular.

4 Choose a Fortification

There is no best fortification.

If you are new to the game take the Wizards Tower. The Wizards Tower is good at all things.

For those looking to make more informed choices, please consider the following;

Point Cost This is how many nation points the fort will cost. The nice forts will eat into your ability to sculpt a strong god/nation. Keep this in mind when making your choice.

Administration This will increase the amount of gold produced in the province. It also helps to gather resources from adjacent provinces. If you are a nation that needs gold and resources, this is a very important thing.

Supply If you intend to have many troops you will need supply to feed them.

Defense This is how long the fort can take a beating. This is usually not very important as the one turn delay caused by the fort is the most important aspect. Additional turns are just gravy.

Time If you intend to make many forts the speed at which they get built is important.

Cost If you intend to make many forts the gold cost is important.

Towers the closer the towers the more extra attacks the fort gets when opponents storm the fort. It's nice to have but administration is usually more important.

Generally speaking if I am looking to make many forts I use the Wizards Tower. If I am looking to start fast and only fortify at strategic locations then the Fortified City is best. If I am low on nation points then I settle for one of the castles.

5 Choose Scales of Dominion

The scales of dominion represent the influence of your god. Your home province will use these scales. Furthermore, provinces that fall under your influence will slowly change until they are the same as your scales. As the power of your god spreads the world will be remade according to his/her vision.

These choices can have a dramatic effect on the lands you control.

- Each scale may have up to three levels of effect.
- Each level of positive scale will cost you nation points.
- Each level of negative scale will gain you nation points.

Consider these scales with care;

Order/Turmoil (+/- 3 points unrest, +/- 5% chance of random events)

With three levels of order you can crank up taxes to 130% with no ill effect. At three levels of turmoil you must have taxes lowered to 70% to stave off unrest.

Productivity/Sloth (+/- 15% resource production, +/- 5% taxes)

If you are raising many ordinary troops then productivity is very important. If you are not using many ordinary troops then sloth won't hurt much.

Heat/Cold (-10% taxes either way)

Nations that like the extreme conditions will not suffer the tax penalties.

Growth/Death (+/- 5% taxes)

In practice there is another effect. This scale will cause a very small amount of turn to turn population change in each province. It's a very small change but it can be influential over time.

Fortune/Ill Fortune (+/- 5% chance of events, +/- 20% chance of good/bad event)

Unlike many games, taking luck in Dominions can make a big difference. I highly suggest never taking Ill Fortune. Nations that take three levels of Fortune will almost never have a bad event.

Magic/Drain (+/- 1/2 magic resistance, +/- 1 research point for mages)

In lands of magic research is easy and spells are hard to resist. In lands of drain research is hard and spells are easy to resist.

6 Choose Level of Dominion

Beneath the scales is a rectangle with a row of candles. If you are new to the game you probably have no idea what this is or how important it can be. The number of candles represents you gods DOMINION.

This is your holy ability to project your will (the scales) out into the world. Your god, your temples, and your prophet each exude dominion into territory around them. Priests can preach to raise dominion inside a province.

Fighting inside your own dominion will enhance your god and prophet greatly. It will also increase your troops morale.

Enemy dominion in your provinces will cause unrest. Enemy dominion in your provinces will alter the provinces to the preferences of the opposing god which may do damage to you. If you have no provinces with your dominion then you have run out of followers and your god will cease to exist (game over).

I find five to seven levels of dominion is enough to protect my interests. Less is risky, as a nearby god with high dominion can potentially drive me out of the game. More is useful if I am attempting to hurt nearby enemies with negative scales that my nation projects.

7 How to Project Power in this Game

These are the basic tools that you can use to hurt your enemies. No nation is good at all of these things. The more you specialize in one aspect, the more you will be weak in another. As you design your nation try to keep in mind what methods you will be using to attack your enemies.

7.1 Ordinary troops

Cavalry, Infantry, Archers, you get the idea. Hire them, give them a commander and go out and secure other peoples land. It's simple, effective, and strangely satisfying.

7.2 Unconventional troops

Troops with flying or stealth can launch attacks by surprise at unexpected places. Think of these as commandos or elite forces. Much more useful versus humans than versus the computer.

7.3 Summoned troops

Mages can summon many fearsome and powerful allies. These conjurations take a commitment in mages, gems, and research. Keep this in mind when designing your nation.

7.4 Combat God

Many players will choose to augment their god and go into combat personally. This is a risk that tends to win big or lose big.

7.5 Heroes

Commanders augmented by spells and magic items can often make a big impact on a battlefield.

7.6 Battle Mages

If you have mages and have done the research then you may be able to sortie a force of mages that can turn the tides of battle with powerful spells.

7.7 Force of Dominion

By projecting dominion into enemy territory you may cause unrest and other effects (depending on your scales). This is a concept that takes some getting used to, but it can make a big difference.

7.8 Assassination

Killing commanders at key times can easily alter the fates of nations. Even if your nation has no assassins, stay aware that some nations do!

7.9 Unrest

Spies can cause unrest in enemy provinces. Try it, you'll like it.

7.10 Spells

There are a variety of spells that will do harm to enemy provinces. These won't win the game by themselves, but it does damage, and they are difficult to defend against.

8 Countering the Enemy

Lightly armored troops are vulnerable to archers.

Heavily armored troops are vulnerable to crossbows.

Missile troops are vulnerable to archers and flyers.

To defend versus unconventional attacks, fortify, patrol, and increase province defenses.

Summoned troops are vulnerable to banishment by priests.

Strong summoned troops, Gods, and heroes should be countered with your own summonings, Gods, and heroes. If you are short on these things then counter with strong squads of heavy cavalry or crossbows.

Mages are vulnerable to archers and flyers. (usually)

Counter enemy dominion with your own. Move in your God, prophet, and priests. Build temples.

To catch assassins and spies you must raise province defenses above 10, and patrol with standing armies. Put some troops with each commander on 'guard commander' duty to help versus those assassins that sneak through.

The best way to stop a player from casting spells into your provinces is to eliminate that player from the game. ;)

9 Ermor

The nation of Ermor gets its own section.

Ermor, the nation of undead plays differently than the other nations. Ermor generates troops for free in all its provinces. If there is a fortification they get stronger troops.

Beyond this, Ermor also generates undead by summonings through their priests. Most nations must gain land to expand their troop base. Ermor can expand its armies by making more priests. Ermor gets stronger with TIME whether they

grow or not. Add in the fact that Ermor tends to radiate all sorts of negative dominion scales and you can see that Ermor can be a real headache for new players.

There are three counters for Ermor.

- Priests can banish the undead. .
- Archers can savage the lightly armored undead in battle.
- Assassins can knock out Ermorian commanders.

Without using these counters Ermor will be nightmarishly difficult to defeat.

10 Starting Spells

All the nations have pre-researched one spell. I got this list off the internet and found it useful. I am copying it here so more players can get this extremely important info.

Dominions national early spell list

Abysia- Flare
Atlantis- Friendly Currents
Pythium- Communion Master,
 Communion Slave
Man- Sleep
Ulm- Legions of Steel
Ctis- Terror
Arcoscephale- Astral Window
Caelum- Wind Guide
Ermor- Raise Skeletons
Marignon- Holy Pyre
Pangaea- Panic
Vanheim- Phantasmal Warrior
Jotunheim- Curse, Luck
R'lyeh- Mind Burn

Flare, Holy Pyre, and Raise Skeletons, give Abysia, Marignon, and Ermor a serious leg up in combat during the first few turns. (IMHO)

11 The End

OK folks, that should be enough to give you a respectable chance of pretending to be informed when you start. I hope this guide helps some players out there.

Enjoy!

-Alex Poger

Obviously I have too much time on my hands...